BROKEN LIGHTS

HAROLD BEGBIE

OCT 2 7 1958

LIBRARY
EVANGELICAL SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

Gift of
Library of L. M. Dice
Cent. PA. Conf.

1,50

Lyman M. Deck
So. Williamsport
Penna.

March 3, 1937

BROKEN LIGHTS

HAROLD BEGBIE

BROKEN LIGHTS

A Short Study On the Varieties of Christian Opinion

BY

HAROLD BEGBIE

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

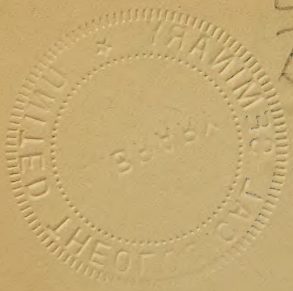
LIBRARY OF
United Theological Seminary
BT
28
.B44
1926
45.106

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

4-3-81

The Evangelical
School of Theology

230
B



COPYRIGHT, 1926,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

BROKEN LIGHTS
— A —
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

Towards the end of last year (1925) I contributed to the columns of the *Daily Mail* newspaper a brief series of articles which attempted to give an account of certain schools of religious thought.

These articles brought me so interesting a correspondence from many quarters of the world that I decided, as many of my correspondents urged me to do, to develop the idea on a larger scale, and to publish it in a more permanent form.

It had seemed to me from the outset that if the average thoughtful man, whose mind is at present undecided what to believe, could find in a single volume, and expressed in quite simple and untechnical language, the reasons which induce various devoted men to believe what they do believe it would help him to come to a more rational decision concerning his own opinions.

This feeling in my mind has strengthened since the articles appeared, and I am now convinced that a book of this nature may serve a useful purpose in the somewhat bewildered life of the present generation.

For the danger of the present time does not so

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

much lie in the divisions which unhappily distract the Church, as in the tendency of the disputants to conduct their controversies in terms so remote from the language of common experience, that the average man is coming more and more to regard religion with the same sort of hopeless indifference with which he regards higher mathematics or the theory of relativity. Religion does not help him. It perplexes him.

This bewilderment in the public mind, leading to indifference, is not only dangerous to the average man, but dangerous to the Church. For it leaves experts or officials in charge of institutions which are vital both to the health of the individual and to the orderly progress of civilisation, institutions in which every man ought to take as deep an interest as he takes in the destiny of his country and the happiness of his own home. One of the consequences of this indifference on the part of the average man is a timorousness and an indecisiveness on the part of the experts; so that it is now perfectly plain to all those who have studied the matter that these divided theologians will never come to a common understanding on the Christian Faith until they are forced into greater activity by the pressure of public opinion.

Therefore this book has two objects: to stimulate interest in religion on the part of the average

man, and to remind the experts and officials in charge of religious institutions that in all those matters which divide them the spirit is of infinitely greater importance than the letter.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	God and Personality	13
II	The Roman Catholic Church . . .	26
III	Anglo-Catholicism	44
IV	Liberal Evangelicalism	56
V	Modernism in General	69
VI	Conservative Modernism	90
VII	Left Wing Modernists	111
VIII	Practical Mysticism	133
IX	Modern Agnosticism	143
X	Lux Mundi	163

BROKEN LIGHTS

The aim of religion is to rise above illusion.

Dr. W. R. Matthews.

I have become more convinced than ever that religion is the most important thing in life, and that it is essential to mental health.

Dr. William Brown.

Dear Friend, it is with you as it is with me; in the particular you feel yourself grand and mighty, but the whole goes as little into your head as into mine.

Goethe.

Common sense is seldom up to date.

Professor Lloyd Morgan.

BROKEN LIGHTS

CHAPTER I

GOD AND PERSONALITY

So much ignorance exists on the subject of religion that, by way of introduction to this study of various opinions concerning the Christian Faith, I will endeavour to summarise the general conclusions of modern thought on the origin and nature of the religious principle.

In its simplest form religion is a feeling in the mind of man that he is related to invisible powers, and is rather a citizen of the universe than a parasite of his particular planet the earth. This feeling is one of the oldest things we know about man, and apparently preceded the earliest curiosities he entertained about his physical environment, which are the origin of science.

At the very dawn of his consciousness man was aware of the supernatural. Unlike other creatures on the earth, he did not accept his natural conditions. An offspring of nature, bounded on all sides by nature, and companioned by other animals, which

placidly accepted nature, man was nevertheless conscious of something all about him, invisible and mysterious, which transcended nature. He seems to have known by instinct that the world on which common sense builds its house of life is not the complete world, and that to rely only on the physical senses is to deceive oneself concerning the verity of existence—an inference which modern science is continually justifying. The first mark of man, we may say, was an *awareness* of the invisible.

This movement in his spirit was destined to travel with him through the myriad of years of human history. Like the first movement in the ether which brought into being the starry host of heaven and filled our planet the earth with multitudinous forms of life, it was a developing movements, and a movement with direction. It was not a mere stirring of the chaos in his animal mind, but a creative impulse taking a course which led, after many years and through many strange vicissitudes, to the supreme grandeur of all human ideas—the idea of immortality.

The serious reader will not hurry over such words as *movement*, *impulse*, and *direction*, but will ponder them until their extreme significance becomes a reality in his mind. In this way he will distinguish between the movement of a stone rolling down a hill or a wave crashing on a beach, and the movement of a bacteriologist's fingers adjusting the lens

of his microscope or a seamstress following a pattern with her needle. The first movement of evolution was not a random collision of matter, nor is its history the chronicle of a mechanical process. It brought into existence not only a universe which is ordered and intelligent, but in man a consciousness able to perceive the intelligence of that universe, to respond to its beauty, and to grow in understanding of the laws by which it is governed.

Like all other movements in creation, man's mysterious impulsion towards the supernatural began in humbleness. His mind peopled the earth with ghosts, and, because he was more animal than man, he gave to many of these ghosts the ferocious characteristics of the animals he most feared. He was a demon-haunted creature for many centuries, but not so ghost-ridden as to accept victimisation at the hands of these invisible powers. He sought either to placate or to outwit the supernatural—a tendency destined to characterise religious development down all the ages.

It is both important and interesting to observe that, while man was plagued by his gods, he was also fascinated by them. This is to say that the supernatural frightened him and charmed him. He was both awed and fascinated. When George Sand declared that she was "tormented by divine things" she was expressing in a phrase the religious

experience of the human race. Man has never been able to live without awareness of the supernatural. He has never been able to shake off the companionship of the invisible. The thought of God has been a delight only to the highest kind of men; for the ruck of humanity it has been either a plague or an inconvenience. To suppose that ignorant and superstitious men invented the idea of God in order to divert their leisure, is as stupid a misreading of history as that which regards evolution as a mechanical process.

As man advanced in knowledge, and the majesty of the universe came home to him with an intellectual significance, he began to transfer the spirits who aided or thwarted him to the skies above his head. To these gods or demons he ascribed certain qualities, and as he himself developed, so did his gods and demons advance in greatness and power. But they remained human in all those things which stamp our nature with an animal ancestry. In Egypt, India, and Greece many of the gods were cruel, selfish, petty, and, for the most part, disgusting. So they remained down to the time of Plato and Aristotle.

There was, however, on the earth a vigorous and realistic people, who developed an idea concerning the supernatural, which was destined to change the

history of mankind. These Hebrew people conceived the idea of a god named Yahveh, and proceeded to denounce the gods of other nations, insisting that Yahveh was the master of those other gods. At first this tribal deity was cruel and mean, a mere mascot of a pertinacious and merciless race; but in the fullness of time, as Hebrew genius developed, there came to inspired men the idea that there was One God of heaven and earth, that no other god existed, and that this God could best be described as the Eternal Righteousness.

It is important to understand how this idea of the Righteousness of God came into human history. Its origin was the old conviction of primitive man that the gods were bigger and more powerful than men. Out of that early notion concerning the supernatural grew the idea that the One God of heaven and earth is also *better* than men—far better than the very best of men. The transition is perhaps natural enough, but it is significant that man should outgrow his gods, and still more significant that he outgrew his gods at the beck of men far in advance of the herd. It was out of the genius of the highest kind of men that had ever existed on the earth that man came to visualise a Being of sinless perfection. As he grew in knowledge and goodness, so did his idea of God become more and more ethical.

Among the Greeks religious thought had taken a similar turn. The higher spirits among them would have nothing to do with the contemptible gods and goddesses of the various Greek religions; most of them appear to have thought that the unity of natural law could proceed from only one Mind, and therefore that there was only one supreme Being; but this God of their thinking tended to be either indefinite and impersonal, or so far above His creation that He was incomprehensible to the mind of man. The Hebrews, however, insisted that the Eternal Righteousness was mindful of man, and demanded of man certain duties and a high standard of conduct.

With the sufferings which came to these Hebrew people from their subjection to great empires, the idea of God grew in splendour and beauty. He was still the God who promised His faithful people the good things of prosperity, but He was also a God who took no delight in bloody sacrifices, who demanded truth in the inward parts, who loved justice, and who was ready to forgive the sins of all those who turned to Him with sincerity, and walked in His ways with humility.

The next stage is reached with the appearance on this earth of a Galilean peasant named Jesus, who, at a moment in human history when the political evolution of the world appeared to have reached

stability, uttered a few simple words which created, when the mighty structure of the Roman Empire fell, an entirely new civilisation, and a civilisation infinitely higher in ethical value than any that had preceded it.

Jesus not only spoke of God as Righteous, and not only described Him as Personal, but called Him by the name of Father. He took the notions of God then current in the world and simplified them till the humblest peasant could understand them. God was not distant and aloof, but was with man. He was, it is true, the Awful One, the Divine, the Eternal Righteousness, but also "your heavenly Father"; and the entire Nature of God, all the inexpressible majesty of the Supreme Being, Who was both transcendent and immanent, could be expressed in one of the homeliest of human words, the word Love. By his teaching Jesus brought into the world an idea which is expressible in the profound phrase, "the humanity of God, and the divinity of man." This is to say, he attributed to man the capacity of perfection, and to God the paternal qualities of compassion, tenderness, and loving helpfulness.

Thus did Jesus rescue the idea of a Supreme Being, both from the horrors of mythology and the bleak inane of metaphysics, bringing it back to its terrestrial birthplace, the heart of man.

With this revelation of the Divine Nature, Jesus also contributed to the world an entirely new idea of human history. Until his time, and even now in every country outside Christendom, men thought of life either as a static thing or as a thing that had descended from perfection to chaos. Jesus put into the mind of man the idea of progress. He set perfection ahead of the human race. He directed men to look forward, not backward, and to work for something not yet achieved, something that was yet to come. His first utterances were entirely concerned with this idea. His whole mission was founded upon it. He preached it as Good News.

This Good News he summarised in the words "The Kingdom of God." "The Kingdom of God" means "The Rule of God." This Rule of God was to take the place of all other rules. "The Rule of God is at hand." "Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven." God so loved the world that He had revealed to men, now that they could understand Him, the only Law by which man can live without anarchy and unhappiness. Henceforth God and Man were at one. Together they would achieve Perfection. The way to Perfection is Love; not tribe against tribe, nation against nation, man against man, but a brotherhood composed of all the races of the earth, each helping the other to realise God's Will, the God Who is your Father

and my Father. "Be of good cheer, little flock; I have overcome the world."

In another place I shall deal with the historical limitation of this idea; but, however narrowly it may be limited to Jewish history, and one particular event, it is beyond question that out of the promulgation of that idea by Jesus proceeded the new and creative idea of human progress, with its consequent straining forward of the hopeful and alert mind towards knowledge, power, and nobler conduct. Before the days of Jesus men looked sorrowfully backward to a fabulous past; since his days they have looked vigorously forward to a realisable betterment.

At this point the average man may be disposed to argue that the evolution of the idea of God, here summarised, is permeated with something which he has learned to call "anthropomorphism." Man created God in his own image, and has been worshipping Him ever since.

There is no sneer in the history of philosophy so shallow as this sneer of anthropomorphism. Science itself has robbed the taunt of all its derision. That man has created God in his own image seems to us now, with greater knowledge, a very valid reason for affirming two of the most important beliefs of religion—the belief in man's divine origin, and the belief in God's immanence. In the soul of man, from his first appearance on the earth, was an as-

piration which marked him off from all other creatures, and *impelled* him with the earliest movements of his consciousness to seek something outside and beyond himself. That aspiration is the most striking and the most glorious of all man's qualities. It is not to be ignored. It is not to be dismissed with only a moment's thought. It is to be held in the consciousness until it is grasped by the mind as the key to the whole mystery of existence. Aspiration is the mark of man.

Aspiration is a quality that deserves the most careful reflection. It is a key that opens the door of conscience, and so enables a man to make acquaintance with the deeper regions of his personality. Whence it came, this impulsion from the past, and to what future it is urging the soul, are questions which are now engaging the attention of philosophers in many countries, and of their labours the average man is recommended to inform himself, if he would think intelligently of his own nature.

The general opinion of those who have studied the documents of the various sciences which bear upon the matter may be expressed in the phrase that *God is the source of evolution, and its object.* Not only does science justify the idea that mind preceded evolution, but it is revealing even in the lowliest of organisms a movement which suggests some form of intelligent activity, so that it is permissible to think that all things have come to be

what they are by reason of an impulse of aspiration within themselves.

In homely language we may say that things are what they are because they have *wanted* to be those things. The term "psycho-biology" is invented to describe this new line of advance. A bulb in a hyacinth glass puts out long roots in its efforts to reach the earth. An amœba, suspended in mid-water, "sends out long pseudo-podia in all directions till it reaches something solid on which it can glide."

A few years ago men dismissed such matters as mere mechanistic reactions; now they are considering the *perception* of the bulb or the amœba, that its situation requires a peculiar effort. That these things behave in different ways, according to their situation, argues not only that they perceive a difference in that situation, but that they are able to interpret it. Science is no longer satisfied with rough-and-ready explanations of even the smallest mysteries; it is searching for reality with extreme attention to those more *inward* problems which a previous generation either overlooked or ignored. And the more carefully it invades the region of the invisible, the more conscious does it become of a straining forward on the part of life which is in the nature of desire.

Now apply this theory to the human race. Evolution achieved in man, as the crown of its striv-

ings, self-conscious personality. By wanting life and more life, by hungering and thirsting after reality, by the aspiration of his never-satisfied mind, man moved through the sleep-like regions of the unconscious until he became a Person—a Living Soul. But even at this high and distinctive mark of self-conscious personality, let him cease to aspire and straightway he tends to return to the animal. If this were not significant enough, let him continue to aspire, and he finds himself forced to raise his moral standards, and to seek all his values in the region of the invisible. Less and less does the fully civilised man find it possible to live by bread alone. And less and less does the degraded man find satisfaction in the things that contented his barbarous ancestors. Something there is in man which rewards him when he strives forward, and punishes him when he seeks to rest on the first levels of human experience.

Is it more reasonable to suppose that this epic of evolution, which from a microscopical germ has produced self-conscious personality with its invisible values, and its ideal of self-sacrifice, is a meaningless accident, signifying nothing; or that self-conscious personality, aspiring onwards, is only a stage on life's journey through a boundless universe?

Modern thought confidently believes that aspiration, which is the mark of man, comes from God, and that only God can satisfy its predestined crav-

ing for absolute truth, absolute goodness, and absolute beauty. It believes that Personality in man could not exist unless God Himself is a Person. Man, then, has not created God in his own image, but in Personality has found a reflection of a Personal Creator, perhaps even the companionship of that Father-Creator. So it comes about that religion in our time teaches men to think of Christianity as a means of deepening and intensifying this aspiration of the individual soul on which the whole progress of the world depends, and bids them come to Christianity, if they would understand it, not troubled by theological difficulties, and not to argue about this dogma or that, but believing that Christ can direct their aspiration towards the path of immortality.

CHAPTER II

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Not without good reason the Roman Catholic regards his Church as the mother of Christianity; and not without justification can he indicate the various and often absurd accents of the denominational mind as a sufficient argument for obedience to one central and traditional authority.

Before we examine the main doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church it may be well for us to acquaint ourselves with the spirit which unites so many men, and men of all nations and degrees, in one fold of the Faith. To this end let us imagine that an average man presents himself before a body of educated Roman Catholics, and asks them to explain their position to him, telling them that he cannot understand how they manage to maintain their faith in the original doctrines of the Church under the constant assaults of physical science.

They would reply, I think, that the issues of life are so momentous that no man who considers them with any real thoroughness could think of

trusting himself for a thesis to the transient theories of philosophy. They would tell him that their Church proves herself the eternal Church of Christ, by giving to man a peace which the world cannot give, and a security which no school of scientific thought can pretend to offer.

"You must not think," they would proceed to say, "that science offers you a complete theory of man's relation with the universe. The gossip of the day would suggest to you that there is no quarrel among the biologists, and that every anthropologist is of one mind concerning the history of our 'species.' On the contrary, science is a house divided against itself. The other day she confidently taught that Mind could be explained in terms of Matter. Now she says that Matter can be understood only in terms of Mind. Science never knows what she believes.

"Do not fall into the error of supposing that your choice lies between two definite creeds—the creed of religion and the creed of science. Science has no creed to offer you. She herself is for ever formulating new theories and squabbling over fresh hypotheses. Science knows nothing of origins. She uses terms like 'Nature' with a looseness which would disgrace a schoolboy.

"What is Nature? She cannot tell us. For centuries she worshipped Newton like a god. That

idol is now cast down, and we are asked to bow ourselves before Einstein, who can bring himself to utter so unintelligible a description of the universe as to say that it is 'finite, but boundless.' She speaks of evolution as an incontrovertible dogma of knowledge, but can no more explain how Plato preceded Martin Tupper, and Epstein took so long a time to succeed Praxiteles and Michelangelo than she can account for the universal degradation of art in the present day, and the animalism which is everywhere reducing politics to a scramble for the trough. What have you to do with such guessers—you with your urgent need of a rule of life? Leave those learned doctors to dispute among themselves. The supreme matter for you is your immortal soul. Do not speculate. Attend to your character."

From this warning against science they would turn with confidence to the tradition of the Christian Religion.

"First of all," they say, "remind yourself of what this religion has done. Look about you. Almost every beautiful thing in architecture dates from the creative impulse of our religion. Go into the cities of Europe, and look at their churches and cathedrals. What grandeur inspired those builders! How confidently, and how joyously, they built for eternity! Enter the picture galleries of Europe. It was the Church who inspired all the greatest

painters with their noblest ideas. So long as the Church reigned in the hearts of men there was nothing built on the earth that was not either majestic or beautiful, and nothing made by craftsmen which was either sordid or inhuman.

"Why was there this note of joyousness, this leap towards sublimity, in the ages of faith? It was because the Church had created a new civilisation in Europe. Never let it slip from your mind that the Christian Church destroyed the brutalities of barbarism in Europe, and brought into existence a civilisation founded upon the incomparable ethics of Jesus.

"The Church not only inspired the architect, the sculptor, the painter, and the glass-worker; she created out of brutal men the exquisite spirit of chivalry. Manners became gentler. Domestic life grew more beautiful. Courage, turned from bullying to exercise itself in self-sacrifice. With the ideal of Christ exalted in its midst, Europe brought into existence a civilisation as superior to that of Greece or Rome as the Spirit of Christ is superior to the soul of Plato or Julius Cæsar. The whole history of philanthropy, with its triumphant note of self-forgetfulness and its ardent zest for the works of love and mercy, was written by those who follow Jesus of Galilee, the Light of the World.

"What! Are we to abandon the traditions of a Faith which has done these marvellous things

because science says this and that, and because certain theologians in the Anglican Church are basely false to their trust? To sell all that a man possesses in order to buy the pearl of great price is wisdom; but to exchange the pearl which is above every value in the world for a bit of pessimistic paper, endorsed by science and modernism, this is an act not only of madness, but of homicidal madness."

This spirit of confidence and certainty expresses itself in every energy of the Catholic Church. It is particularly emphasised in its propaganda, and no Roman Catholic journalist would ever appear to enter the lists of controversy with a single misgiving in his mind. One of my correspondents has recently addressed several letters to me in which this spirit expresses itself in a thoroughly combative fashion, and he has enclosed for my instruction numerous cuttings from Roman Catholic newspapers, which are almost lyric in the happiness of conviction. I will quote a few passages from both the letters and the newspapers:

My correspondent tells me that 320,000,000 Catholics and 100,000,000 Greek Orthodox believe—

that Jesus Christ is God, that His Mother was always a Virgin, that Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory are geographical expressions, that the two former are *everlasting*, that Adam and Eve were the

two first humans created, that they sinned, that Christ as God and Man came to redeem us, and that He left us still the end of time His Real Body and Blood on an altar in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

All this Catholics believed nineteen hundred years ago, all this *all Catholics* believe to-day, the man-in-the-street notwithstanding. The opinions or the unbelief of the ignorant fool-man-in-the-street doesn't affect these FACTS one iota.

Does the man-in-the-street think he is endowed with more brains and intellect than Mr. Stanley James, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, and Father Ronald Knox, three of our Church's latest and most intellectual converts? What's good enough for them is surely good enough for the average brainless unthinking fool in the street.

In a later communication he writes:

I will copy out for you a hymn which is sung in whole or in part (in the Latin tongue) at the Benediction . . . and which enumerates four points of dogma in which 320 million Catholics and 100 million Greek Christians in the world thoroughly believe, and which 15,000 converts in Great Britain every year also profess and believe in *before* they are admitted to the Church.

I will quote three verses of the hymn:

Sing, my tongue, the Saviour's glory,
Of His Flesh the mystery sing,
Of the Blood all price exceeding
Shed by our immortal King,
Destined for the world's Redemption
From a noble womb to spring.

. . . . . .

On the night of that Last Supper,
Seated with His chosen band,
He the paschal victim eating
First fulfils the law's command,
Then, as food to all His brethren,
Gives Himself with His own hand.

Word made Flesh, the bread of nature
By His word to flesh He turns,
Wine into His blood He changes,
What tho' sense no change discerns,
Only be the heart in earnest
Faith her lesson quickly learns.

One of the cuttings enclosed in this letter is a writing by Mr. Stanley B. James in *The Catholic Times*. It concerns a document called The Penny Catechism, and after paying a high compliment to the English of this publication, proceeds in a lighter but none the less confident manner:

My friends Dr. Hum and Professor Haw are inclined to be very critical of the Catechism. Dr. Hum picked up a copy the other day, and opened it at the page which deals with the second article of the creed. "Is Jesus Christ truly God?" he read. "Jesus Christ is truly God." Just that! As if you were to ask someone his name and he were to answer, "John Jones!" The same brusque certainty! No attempt to tone down so startling a statement or to explain it!

"It is absurd," said the Doctor, "to attempt to answer a question so bristling with difficulties in that off-hand manner. It may have done in a simpler age, but to-day there are—'um—a score of ways of interpreting what used to be known as the doctrine of the Incarnation. That Jesus was—

'um—the finest expression of the divine spirit in man I do not doubt—'um—for a moment, but to declare in that categorical manner that He was God is to display an insensitiveness to the various currents of theological thought in our age."

Professor Haw's complaint was of a somewhat different character. . . . "To ask a grown man of intelligence to study these elementary answers," he remarked, "is—haw—monstrous. It is treating us all as if we were in the infant class. The Catholic Church must realise that it is not dealing to-day with primitive savages, but with an educated and enlightened generation. I should positively refuse—haw—to submit myself to an inquisition of this kind." And he tossed the offending booklet aside.

Neither of them had a good word to say for it. That is what makes me so sure that it is the right thing. It cuts through the mush of Dr. Hum's hesitant mind and the flatulent intellectual conceit of the Professor like a Roman phalanx through a horde of undisciplined savages. In the long run it is this characteristic that is going to tell. Even if I were an uninterested outsider, I think I should have gumption enough to see that the Church which knew its own mind so well and expressed it with so little fear of current prejudices would, in the end, win the day as against the Hum-and-Haw school of thinkers. The sheer weight of such uncompromising authority crushes all in its path.

In a less vigorous style, another writer in the same newspaper expresses his satisfaction in the

Catholic Church by pointing to the extreme confusion and disorder in the Anglican Church:

"Your system will make all England infidel," wrote Rev. Dr. Cahill to the Anglican divines of 1853. Can the truth of his prediction be denied to-day? The Anglican divines are not agreed amongst themselves on matters of faith; what the Modernist rejects the High Churchman retains, and the Low, or evangelical, Churchman differs from both. What is sound doctrine in one diocese is unsound in the next, over and above the fact that what "the Church" officially taught in one generation and thought should be believed then has been, or will be, officially altered in another, e.g., baptismal regeneration, which last century was reduced to mere matter of opinion. What is the sense of asking that sort of "church" what it believes, and thinks should be taught? The contrast between the man-made "churches" which form Protestantism and the Church of Christ emphasises the spiritual advantage of being a member of the Divine Institution. For the Church of Christ speaks as He spoke, not with the uncertain words of human wisdom, but with power, authority, and certainty, teaches everywhere the same truths clearly, definitely, infallibly; her members are not asking two thousand years after the birth of Christ what they are to believe, and what the Church teaches; they believe as their forefathers believed, as the first Christians believed, and were taught; their feet are set like theirs on the solid Rock of Peter, not floundering in bogs and quicksands of doubt, guess-work, flexible opinion, and unbelief. The unity of our Church, the

stupendous spectacle she presents of absolute oneness of faith in teacher and taught, are the envy and the despair of her enemies, whose efforts to decry her pay her an amazing tribute, all unconscious and involuntary though it be.

The persistence of so confident a spirit in a generation more tentative and agnostic than probably any other generation of men since the revival of learning is a remarkable fact of the modern world; but it is necessary, if one would understand the Catholic spirit, to consider the main doctrines which unite this great host of the faithful into one fold.

For this purpose I shall take advantage of a singularly lucid Catechism ordered by the National Synod of Maynooth, and sent to me with the following inscription on the cover: "Here is the Religion St. Augustine preached to Egbert, while St. Patrick preached at Tara, and which you will do well to learn and practise until God call you to His Kingdom."

This Catechism [1] begins with certain prayers, of which I will quote the following:

The Confiteor

I confess to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the Saints, that I have sinned

[1] Published by Messrs. M. H. Gill & Son, Ltd., of Dublin.

exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore, I beseech the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, the blessed Michael the Archangel, the blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the Saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

May the Almighty God have mercy on me, forgive me my sins, and bring me to life everlasting. Amen.

May the Almighty and merciful Lord grant me pardon, absolution, and remission of my sins. Amen.

Indulgenced Prayers

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I offer you my heart and soul.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you. (*300 days' Indulgence.*)

The place of Joseph in heaven, as the husband of God's mother, is one of evident importance:

O God! who in Thine ineffable Providence didst vouchsafe to choose Blessed Joseph to be the Spouse of Thy Most Holy Mother, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may be made worthy to receive him for our intercessor in heaven, whom we venerate as our holy and most powerful protector; who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

An Act of Faith

O my God! I firmly believe that Thou art one only God, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, infinitely great and infinitely good. I firmly believe that in Thee, one only God, there are three Divine Persons, really distinct, and equal in all things—the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I firmly believe that God the Son, the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, became man; that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and was born of the Virgin Mary; that He suffered and died on a cross to redeem and save us; that He arose the third day from the dead; that He ascended into heaven; that He will come at the end of the world to judge mankind; that He will reward the good with eternal happiness, and condemn the wicked to the everlasting pains of hell. I believe these and all other articles which the holy Roman Catholic Church proposes to our belief, because Thou, my God, the Infallible Truth, hast revealed them; and Thou hast commanded us to hear the Church, which is the pillar and the ground of truth. In this faith I am firmly resolved, by Thy holy grace, to live and die (Matt. xviii. 17; I Tim. iii. 15).

From the Catechism itself I make such quotations as show clearly the main teachings of the Catholic Church in matters of the first importance.[1]

Q. What do you mean by mysteries of religion?
A. Truths which we cannot comprehend.

[1] The answers are slightly abbreviated.—H. B.

Q. Why does God require of us to believe mysteries of religion?

A. That we may pay Him the homage of our understanding.

Q. How do we pay the homage of our understanding to God?

A. By firmly believing on God's word whatever He has revealed, be it ever so difficult to us.

. . . . .

Q. What means the Blessed Trinity?

A. One God in three Divine Persons.

Q. Are the three Divine Persons three Gods?

A. The three Divine Persons are only one God, having but one and the same divine nature, and they are from eternity.

. . . . .

Q. Why did God the Son become man?

A. To redeem and save us.

Q. How did Christ redeem and save us?

A. By His sufferings and death on the cross.

Q. Was it by His passion and death also Christ satisfied the justice of God for our sins?

A. By His passion and death Christ satisfied the justice of God, and delivered us from hell, and from the power of the devil.

Q. How came we to be in the power of the devil?

A. By the disobedience of our first parents in eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. ii. and iii.).

Q. Who were our first parents?

A. Adam and Eve, the first man and woman.

Q. Why did God command our first parents not to eat the forbidden fruit?

A. In order to prove to them His dominion over

them, and their dependence on Him—and to try their obedience.

Q. Who tempted our first parents to eat the forbidden fruit?

A. The devil, envying our first parents their happy state, tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit (Gen. iii.).

Q. Whom do you mean by the devil?

A. By the devil I mean one of the rebellious or fallen angels whom God cast out of heaven.

Q. What evils befell us in consequence of the disobedience of our first parents?

A. We were all made partakers of the sin and punishment of our first parents, as we should be all sharers in their innocence and happiness, if they had been obedient to God (Rom. v. 12).

Q. What other particular effects follow from the sin of our first parents?

A. Our whole nature was corrupted by the sin of our first parents—it darkened our understanding, weakened our will, and left in us a strong inclination to evil. . . .

Q. Has original sin been transmitted to all the descendants of our first parents without exception?

A. The Blessed Virgin Mary, by a singular privilege of grace, bestowed on her through the merits of her Divine Son, was preserved free from the guilt of original sin, and this privilege is called her Immaculate Conception.

. . . . .

Q. How many years after the fall of our first parents did God the Son become man?

A. About four thousand years after the fall of our first parents.

Q. How could they be saved who lived before God the Son became man?

A. By the belief of a Redeemer to come, and by keeping the commandments of God.

Q. On what day did God the Son become man?

A. On the twenty-fifth of March, the day of the Annunciation.

Q. Where are true Christians to be found?

A. Only in the true Church. . . .

Q. Is there any other true Church besides the Holy Catholic Church?

A. As there is but *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all*, there can be but the one true Church (Ephes. iv.).

Q. Are all obliged to be of the true Church?

A. All are obliged to belong to the true Church, and no one can be saved out of it (Acts ii.; Luke x.; John x.; Matt. xviii.).

Q. Can the Church err in what it teaches?

A. The Church cannot err in what it teaches; because Christ said to the pastors of His Church: *Go ye, therefore, teach all nations; and behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world* (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

Q. Can the Pope err in what he teaches?

A. The Pope can no more err than the Church, when, as Supreme Pastor, he teaches doctrines of faith or morals, to be held by all the faithful.

Q. Where do they go who die in mortal sin?

A. They who die in mortal sin go to hell, for all eternity.

From these authoritative answers to the questions of an inquiring mind, the reader who has no real knowledge of the Catholic Church, may learn the great central teaching of the oldest and most numerous body of Christians existing in the modern world.

There are some Catholics, no doubt, who would frame their answers to these same questions in different words, but an overwhelming majority of Catholics would find no ground for quarrel in the blunt and emphatic answers of this Catechism, and all Catholics, however philosophically they may express their faith, do profoundly believe in the doctrines which these answers express in simple language for simple people.

Those doctrines may be summarised as follows: The creation of the world by God; the existence of a Devil; the Fall of Man; the divine institution of the Passover; the Incarnation of Christ Jesus, the Second Person of the Godhead; the Redemption of mankind by His sacrifice on the Cross; the Inspiration of His Church by the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Godhead; the eternal happiness of those who trust in His atoning Blood and remain faithful to the one true Church; the eternal damnation of those who reject His Sacraments or who die in the midst of their sins.

This faith, of which the Mass is the central ex-

pression, has inspired men and women to live lives which have permanently enriched human experience and elevated man's nature to a height of enviable moral grandeur. It has not only saved scores of thousands of women from living fruitless and vulgar lives in the midst of a world which is always excited and never at rest, but it has also given them to the devoted and loving service of the suffering, the sorrowful, and the lost. It has sent men of learning into the most perilous climates, and among the most forbidding of backward peoples to sacrifice their lives in teaching these doctrines and ministering to those degraded savages. In the less romantic region of man's ordinary daily life it has been a power on the side of family love, domestic purity, and virtuous pleasures, dignifying the humblest forms of labour, sweetening the most bitter forms of suffering, and consoling the most tragic forms of sorrow. Moreover, in spite of mistakes which many Catholics are the first to deplore, its historic contribution to the progress of civilisation has been greater than that of any other religious institution in the world. If it has not always helped science or taken a foremost part in social betterment, it has ever acted as a steadying influence in periods either of intellectual vanity or of political excitement, and among the great names in science, statesmanship, and philosophy are those of many devoted Catholics.

We shall see in the next chapter on what grounds the orthodox Anglo-Catholic differs from the Roman Catholic teaching, and in further chapters on what grounds the Evangelical Christian remains more sullenly outside the fold of the original Church; but it may be said at once that the points on which most orthodox schools of Christianity are in agreement are far more numerous, and infinitely more important, than those which perpetuate the division of Christendom. Indeed it would seem that only the Left Wing of Modernism is in extreme conflict with the Catholic Church, and that the nature of its conflict separates Modernism not one whit less completely from all the other Churches of Christendom than from the Mother Church of Rome.

CHAPTER III

ANGLO-CATHOLICISM

THE same fierce and contemptuous intolerance which marked the religion of the Hebrew people marked the religion of Christianity in its conflict with the Roman Empire. Indeed, it is now acknowledged that Christians were the first people to introduce the spirit of intolerance into the ancient world, and to destroy that wide and generous freedom of mind which was a chief glory of Roman civilisation, but also perhaps its chief danger.

If we could have interrogated one of the persecuting emperors [says a devoted Churchman], and asked him why he treated Christianity with an intolerance not meted out to any other form of religion, he would have probably replied that it was the Christians themselves who first introduced the spirit of intolerance. The Christians alone, he would have said, denounce all other religions as the worship of demons, and miss no opportunity of insulting them.[1]

What was the origin of this intolerance? Often, particularly in small people, intolerance is the mean

[1] *A Short History of Our Religion*, By D. C. Somervell. (G. Bell & Sons.)

consequence of a contemptible fear; but the Hebrew prophets were not small-minded men, and the early Christians, far from fearing death, courted it. Ignatius of Antioch described his fellow-Christians as the wheat of God longing to be ground by the teeth of wild beasts into the pure bread of Christ; and many a martyr in those days of religious ecstasy went to his death with all the signs of triumph and delight.

The explanation would seem to be that any conviction which liberates the mind from perplexity or defeat, giving to life at the same time a clear and well-marked course of action, ends inevitably in a spirit of intolerance. It is the person who only half believes his religion and is only half sure of himself who is genially tolerant towards those who are either openly or indirectly opposed to him. Intolerance, we might almost say, is the expression of an overwhelming conviction.

How could the Hebrew prophet, who had realised the Invisible Supreme as the Eternal Righteousness, tolerate the sight of craven savages crawling on all fours to a monstrous idol, or whirling by the aid of alcohol and music either round some disgusting symbol of sensual origin, or before an altar streaming with blood? In the same way, how could Christians, who had found in the Lord Christ an incarnation of God and a Saviour from the bur-

den of grievous sins, regard with patience and toleration the degraded Greco-Asiatic superstitions which flourished in Rome during the first three centuries of the present era—some of them so gross and hideous that they confirmed in men only the lowest tendencies of human nature?

To understand the spirit of Anglo-Catholicism the man who is outside religion must first understand what happens to the mind when it is liberated from indecision, and finds itself impelled in a definite direction with a positive thesis of life. The earliest result of such an experience appears to be one of extreme thankfulness and joy. This first sensation of extraordinary satisfaction and delight flows over into the field of action, and becomes an intense and selfless loyalty. The soul finds itself no longer solitary in the isolation of individualism or cold with the paralysis of its divided affections. It is one of a great army of rejoicing companions, marching to certain victory over all darkness and all error. How is it possible that a spirit so rejoicingly set free and so alert and passionate in its discovery of a definite manner of existence, should look with patient and amused eyes either on the activities of those who attack its Saviour or on the wretchedness and coldness of those who refuse to consider that Saviour as the Light of the World?

Impassioned loyalty and vigorous intolerance are found in Mohammedans, and, like the same qualities in Christians, are the consequence of gratitude to a genuinely historical figure. Never are these qualities found in any religion which looks back to a legendary founder or to a primitive superstition. They are the marks of a reasoned and historic faith, absolutely inspired by an authentic person and a real event. It is interesting to observe, by the way, that the clash of these two loyalties, the Christian and the Mohammedan, has done more than anything else to keep East and West apart, and to hinder the evolution of the British Empire into a power of unassailable supremacy.

Now the Anglo-Catholic differs from all other members of the English Church chiefly in this, that his gratitude for liberation and enlightenment impels him to lay all the emphasis of his reason on the historical facts of his religion. He has been liberated from the uncertainties, the hesitancies, and the provincialism which in his opinion characterise most forms of Protestantism; and in the historic basis of Catholicism he has found a standpoint of enlightenment from which he can behold the life of Jesus as the absolute and final Revelation of God. For him the Christian Faith is inconceivable without the Incarnation, and hence it is that he gives so much attention and so great a

devotion to those ritual practices which seem to the Protestant mere symbols, but which in his eyes consecrated by centuries of adoration, tend to heighten and intensify man's sense of this historic mystery—the Incarnation of Almighty God.

The typical Christian can never say with the Hindu or the extreme modernist: "What does it matter about the accidental fact of history—whether there ever was such a person who revealed God? We have got the *idea*, and that is true, any way; what more do you want?" "No," says the Christian; "if the Word did not really become flesh, then I cannot believe in Him; if in that historical figure I cannot see God, then I am without God in the world; as He said, it is only through Him that men come to the Father." The certainty of the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" is bound up for the Christian with the knowledge of Him "Who once in time was slain."

. . . Such stress laid on the central importance of the historical only appears at the higher stages of religious growth, and increases rather than diminishes with their advance.[1]

The Christian whose loyalty expresses itself in devotion to the ethic of Jesus, and who does not trouble to disentangle the historical confusion which surrounds the early days of Christian history, lives his life, in the view of Anglo-Catholicism, at the peril of emotional reaction, and builds his house

[1] *Some Alternatives to Jesus Christ.* By John Leslie Johnston. (Longmans, Green & Co.)

of faith on the sands of individual caprice. For Anglo-Catholicism there must be a foundation of rock under a superstructure so contrary to human experience and so sensitive to all the winds of Intellectual theorising; and this rock he finds in an institution which goes back in his opinion to the first days of the Christian religion—indeed, to the very dawn of the Light of the World.

That Christ did found a Church is for Anglo-Catholicism as great an historical fact as that Jesus lived. In that Church the convinced Anglo-Catholic finds a fortress against all doubts that assail the mind; and to repair and defend it becomes for him as clear a duty as to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick. Active in all works of mercy, industrious in all forms of missionary enterprise, unselfish, generous, enthusiastic, and, outside the province of doctrine, intensely evangelical, Anglo-Catholicism is only distinguished from the other toiling sections of the English Church by the fervour of its devotion to Catholic tradition.

This spirit in England had its rise in the time of Archbishop Laud, who, although he desired to see the Church subject to the civil authority, was in every other respect what we should call a High Churchman, or even an extreme Ritualist. He made his position, which has so often been misunder-

stood, perfectly plain in the following notable statement:

No one thing hath made conscientious men more wavering in their own minds or more apt and easy to be drawn aside from the sincerity of the religion professed by the Church of England than the want of uniform and decent order in too many churches of the Kingdom. It is true that inward worship of the heart is the great service of God, and no service is acceptable without it; but the external worship of God in His Church is the great witness to the world that our heart stands right in that service of God. And a great weakness it is not to see the strength which ceremonies—things weak enough in themselves, God knows—add even to religion itself.

In spite of the triumph of Puritanism, this same spirit continued to persist in England, and after the enthusiasm of Methodism had spent itself revived in the devout and scholarly form known as the Oxford Movement. Evangelicalism seemed to sweep everything before it during the greater part of Queen Victoria's reign, but the work of the Oxford Movement survived that wonderful activity, and now, in the name of Anglo-Catholicism, it is unquestionably the most vigorous and rejoicing school of Christian thought. No other body in the Church of England appears to have quite the same conviction of its own rightness or anything like the same spirit of joyous and creative energy.

Among the older Anglo-Catholics there are those who look with some anxiety on the younger men's enthusiasm for ceremony, thinking that this enthusiasm for the symbol may take the place of reverence for the thing symbolised. These older men also feel themselves to be permanently estranged from the Roman Church, and regard reunion as a working agreement, rather than anything in the nature of alliance or absorption. But many of the younger men appear to regard reunion as the chief goal of all their endeavours, and perhaps remain in the Church of England mainly to convert her to the Roman obedience. One of them, who in recent times made his submission to Rome, has confessed that, in celebrating the Holy Communion, he was wont to use the language of the Prayer Book when he spoke aloud, but when he spoke *secreto* the words ordered by the Latin missal. During his years as an Anglican priest he made the informing remark that while Roman Catholics "have to serenade the British public from the drive, we Anglo-Catholics have the *entrée* to the drawing-room."

This attitude seems a perfectly natural one from the standpoint of Anglo-Catholicism. If Christ founded a Church, and gave to Peter the power to bind and to loose, and if he promised that the Holy Spirit of God should guide that Church into all truth, it would seem a very manifest act of dis-

loyalty to serve under any other banner. If, as Anglo-Catholics aver, the Reformation was a blunder and a sin, and if Protestantism, as they hold, is either wearing itself out or losing itself in the wilderness of modern scepticism, then surely the way of the true disciple leads straight back to that enduring Rock of Ages which has maintained the true faith from the days of St. Peter to the present time.

On all the main points of Christian doctrine the orthodox Anglo-Catholic is in complete agreement with Rome. He believes that God made Adam and Eve perfect, that Satan took the form of a serpent and tempted them to their destruction, that God foreshadowed His way of redemption by teaching the Hebrews the institution of the Passover, that the Word of God was made flesh, and was born of a pure virgin, and became man's Paschal Lamb, being slain on the cross for our redemption, and that He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will surely come to judge the whole world, welcoming His faithful ones into eternal bliss, and casting the disobedient into everlasting flames.

The great majority of Anglo-Catholics also believe that the bread and wine of Holy Communion are changed into the flesh and blood of Christ, and as such are to be worshipped. They pray to the Mother of Jesus, addressing her as the Mother

of God, and they make no objection to offering supplications to the saints of the Christian calendar. Their only difficulty in accepting the discipline of Rome seems to touch the two recent dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility—matters which would seem to be of secondary importance, if the first premise is granted that Christ, who was God, founded a Church which has ever since been guided by the Holy Spirit.

Other Anglo-Catholics find themselves unable to resist the teaching that the final authority in all matters of doctrine is the Bible, and they confess that there are certain teachings of the Roman Church for which they can discover no sanction in Holy Writ. But these men are more and more troubled by their conviction that Holy Writ cannot be left to private judgment for its interpretation, and so, looking on all the confusions of Protestantism, more and more do they find their objections to Rome weakening in force and changing in character.

Loyalty to the Person of the incarnate Christ of Catholic tradition is the first article of Anglo-Catholicism, and faith in his Church the inevitable corollary of that loyalty. Therefore it would seem that the destiny of tributary Anglo-Catholicism is to merge itself into the main stream of Latin Catholicism, and that the days of schism are fast drawing to an end. Certainly there appears little

of the old vigour and fervour in English Protestantism, which once felt itself entirely convinced that Popishness was the deliberate work of the devil.

"Reunion," says Mr. Somervell, "will not be achieved in a day or in a year, but like the ideal (as distinct from the actual and norminal) League of Nations, it *must* be achieved, and the task of achieving both Leagues must be pursued steadily and patiently. For of both it may be said, either they will be achieved or Christian civilisation will fail."

This utterance does not perhaps go far enough for the orthodox Anglo-Catholic who seeks to escape from what he feels to be the indignity of a branch church, and to lose himself in the one central and sovereign authority of the Christian religion.

Other members of the Anglican Church, cherishing the same ideal, but more confident that the Anglican Church is a true Church, hope that Rome may one day recognise their branch, and abandon some of her extreme demands. But the orthodox Anglo-Catholic is inclined to agree with Dr. Inge's wounding taunt: "It is quite useless to expect recognition as a reward for close imitation, though it may be the sincerest form of flattery. Do you think that the makers of Sunlight Soap would beam on a rival firm which sold a product indistinguishable from their own, and quite as good for cleansing purposes? . . . Only Rome goes further, and says, 'Any other soap leaves you dirtier than you were be-

fore.' There is absolutely no chance of Rome surrendering her claim to a monopoly of Catholic rights and privileges, or of accepting any terms short of absolute submission." [1]

As for association with the Eastern Church, the same authority says that this notion reminds him of the cruel jest of Mezentius, "who bound the living bodies of his enemies to corpses."

[1] *The Church and the Age.* By W. R. Inge. (Longmans.)

CHAPTER IV

LIBERAL EVANGELICALISM

When we consider that the Englishman is not by nature either obedient or æsthetic, but that he is by nature a rugged moralist, who lays the blunt emphasis of his practical life on the difference between right and wrong, we should conclude that no school of religious thought would stand so firmly in his affections as the school of Liberal Evangelicalism.

And certainly this school of thought still holds its own with power and dignity in the North of England, and is to be found scattered about the more Anglo-Catholic minded South, and occupying a good deal of even metropolitan attention. But it does not seem to possess that great driving fervour of conviction which energises Anglo-Catholicism, and which more than once made Evangelicalism easily the chief force in England's religious life.

The average Liberal Evangelical believes as earnestly as the Anglo-Catholic that Jesus was an historic person, and that loyalty to Jesus is the first and supreme duty of the Christian. He be-

lieves, also, that Jesus founded a Church, and that this Church has been guided throughout the ages by the Holy Spirit. But he differs from the Anglo-Catholic in his attitude towards the Reformation, regarding that vivid moment in history, not as disastrous but as almost another Pentecost—a mighty inspiration of the Holy Spirit to save the Church of Christ from reversion to paganism.

For him, in his moral realism, the Church of Christ is composed of all people who endeavour to serve their Master faithfully, and who take their marching orders only from the Holy Scriptures. But just as he believes that the Reformation was an act of God, so he believes that the Holy Scriptures are to be studied in every age for new light on the Revelation of Christ. He sees, and deplores, the peril in private interpretation of those difficult writings; but he holds that this peril is preferable to a uniformity depending upon an interpretation of Scripture which altogether refuses to consider the knowledge of later generations. For him the Incarnation of God was not only an event in the past, or a perpetual act of ritual symbolism, but a continuing activity which is destined to lead humanity into a deeper and wider knowledge of the truth than was conceivably possible to men in the days before science. His idea of Christianity is that it is a progress towards truth, not a reversion to static tradition, and the only authority

he recognises in the interpretation of Scripture is the authority of scholarship and reverence, allied with implicit faith in the divinity of Christ.

He believes, as do the Roman Catholic and the Anglo-Catholic, that in the far past of the human race there was an act which may fitly be called the Fall of Man. But he regards the account of that great matter in Genesis as an allegory, and believes neither in Adam and Eve nor in the whispering serpent. He says that by this story, the like of which is to be found in a considerable number of religions, men at a crude stage of civilisation were taught to understand a real fact in humanity's past, knowledge of which was essential to their progress. They were taught to understand that sin is a non-natural and rebellious act of the human will, and that before communion with God can be established in the soul sin must be hated and abandoned.

God's mercy, they hold, manifested itself to all the generations of men by raising up prophets and seers, who inspired them to fight against the evil in their nature, and to triumph over the superstitions of idolatry. In the fullness of time, when the progress of humanity was approaching a dangerous halt, and the whole orb of civilisation, with its noble Hebrew morality and its magnificent Greek learning, was about to plunge backward towards the night of savage paganism, God sent His Son into

the world, not only to save the world, but to reveal to the world the patient love with which He regards His creation.

The crucifixion of Jesus represents for the Liberal Evangelical a sacrifice for sin, but he is disposed to interpret that phrase in a manner which separates him from the great bulk of Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics. He does not so greatly insist that the death of Christ altered in any way the disposition of God towards erring humanity, as that by his willingness to die Christ drew men away from selfishness, which is the root cause of all evil, and so brought them into relation with God —that God of Whom it is written that He so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that all who believed on him should never die.

As the sun shines eternally upon the world, and is only hidden by clouds, or wilfully darkened by shutters and blinds, so the love of God has for ever streamed towards the heart of man, and has only been flung back by the clouds of sin, or deflected by the shutters and blinds of the selfish will. By his manifestation of the Father's unchanging and eternal love, the Son of God revealed to men that their hearts and wills have only to be open towards God to receive the power to become sons of God.

It is the life and character of Jesus, rather than any act in his life, which inspires the devotion of the Liberal Evangelical, and which leads him to stress the power of Jesus to save men from sin's unhappiness. He is not so concerned to commend to men the consolation of belonging to a particular Church, which has always thought in one particular way, as to draw them to experience in their own natures the mysterious power of Christ to exalt the soul and purify the heart.

This, according to Liberal Evangelicals, is the real Revelation of God to man, and they insist that the object of the Incarnation was not to make men think alike concerning the nature of Jesus, or the relationship existing between God and His Christ, but to alter the disposition of man's heart, and to elevate him through aspiration and conduct to the position of a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

It may be convenient if I give in this place certain remarks made to me on the matter of his own personal attitude to theological controversy by a Liberal Evangelical clergyman, who exercises a notable influence in London. He said to me, "When a man comes to us with religious doubts, we tell him that we haven't the brains to help him in such a difficult matter, and give him the name and ad-

dress of a scholarly person, who has made theology his life's study. If he then asks us, as these people generally do, how we manage to get along without intellectual solutions of theological problems in an age of universal doubt, we tell him that we are so occupied all day long in helping men and women to know the power of Christ in their hearts and souls that we have really no time for theology, even if we had the necessary learning of an expert and the commanding intellect of a philosopher to express ourselves in that metaphysical region.

"Such a statement," he continued, "naturally leads to the question, what do you mean, I and my colleagues, when we speak of the power of Christ? This is our opportunity, and we get to work. We tell the inquirer that to enter into that state of being which Christ called the Kingdom of Heaven it is necessary for a man to become as a little child. He must not, that is to say, approach Christ with any other desire in his heart than to love him, and to become like him. When that desire is sincere, we assure him, Christ answers by the bestowal of his divine power—a strange power, a power unlike any other power on the earth, for it enables a man to escape out of himself, and to become radiant with a happiness which has no touch in it at all of natural selfishness. It is a power which can save a drunkard from his thraldom, change the whole atmosphere of an unhappy

home, turn an idle and unhappy woman of fashion into a rejoicing servant of the poor, and rescue the harlot from a form of existence which is visibly destructive of both body and soul. A strange power indeed, and stranger in this perhaps than in other more dramatic manifestations of its supernatural origin, that it can revolutionise at a stroke the entire outlook of the average man, who is neither good nor bad, neither happy nor unhappy, but restless, always restless and dissatisfied. Such a man as this, if he can be persuaded to take the plunge into Christian faith—that head-long plunge down from selfishness, intellectual uncertainty, and a perplexing variety of divided affections, down from all this, and into the deep and cleansing waters of absolute surrender to the Will of God and the Heart of Christ—rises up changed from head to foot, with a new sky over his head, a new horizon before him, a sure ground under his feet for evermore, and such a music in his heart as he has not heard since he first listened to Christmas bells."

This attitude, although more picturesquely expressed than is perhaps usual, is the general attitude of mind towards Christ among Liberal Evangelicals. But it must not be thought that any spirit of modernism inspires their theological outlook. They are absolutely insistent on the divinity of Christ, in the orthodox sense that he was the second Person of a

triune Godhead, and if they are pressed on such questions of doctrine they usually reply, that while they hold these doctrines with unquestioning faith, and unshakeable loyalty, they hold them as mysteries above the comprehension of human understanding, and therefore wholly unamenable to precise definition. For example, they will say that whether Gabriel appeared to Mary, and whether Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and whether the shepherds were led by angels to visit him in his manger, and whether the Wise Men brought him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, whether these things were or were not, certain is it that never before in the history of mankind was such a birth, and therefore every legend and allegory which can deepen in men's mind the sense of that holy incident is justified by the consequence it effects in human character.

They are not more out of sympathy with extreme Modernism than with Anglo-Catholicism. For if extreme Modernism, in their judgment, tends to shatter the whole fabric of Christendom by minimising the divinity of Christ, Anglo-Catholicism, by its ritual preoccupations, and its over-emphasis on institutionalism, tends to divert men from the true business of Christianity which is the relation of the individual heart to God through Christ Jesus. Anything which obscures this main purpose of the Chris-

tian Revelation, namely, the conversion of the individual will to the knowledge and love of God, meets with their regretful condemnation.

Wide-minded and tolerant as they are in their interpretations of Holy Writ, these men are, nevertheless, as firmly convinced of its central truths as any section of the Christian Faith, even the most extreme school of bibliolatry. For them, it must be clearly understood, even at the cost of repetition, Christ is the indubitable Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind. By him and through him men come to a knowledge and love of God, not to be won from any other revealer of God's truth; and if the Mass is for them an objectionable superstition, Holy Communion is nevertheless the highest form of symbolical worship in the service of the Church, and a worship in which every man whose will has truly been converted by Christ's love to a knowledge of God will rejoice to take part.

They are free from the narrowness of those extreme Evangelicals whose western outlook seems wholly incapable of understanding eastern habits of speech, and who insist that every word uttered by Jesus must be taken in its literal meaning. They do not speak, for example, of "the Blood of Christ" in any realistic manner, but solely in a figurative sense; they do not think that men and women are

actually washd in the blood of Christ, or that the wine in Holy Communion is changed at consecration into Christ's blood, or that the actual blood of Christ satisfied his Heavenly Father for the sins of the whole world. But they do believe, and believe earnestly, that by his death upon the cross, more than by any word that came from his lips, or any other act in his life, Jesus broke down in the heart of man something which had hitherto made it hard for him to understand the nature of God.

The death of the sinless One, the cruel sufferings of innocence, and the mocking humiliations heaped upon the gentle revealer of God's love, these great and awful things, in their judgment, when once honestly contemplated, create in the hearts of men a desire to serve the Son of God as their Master, and to follow him to their lives' end.

In like manner they are inclined to regard the resurrection of Jesus as a spiritual resurrection, and his ascension into heaven as a spiritual ascension; but they do not doubt for a moment that the risen Christ did indeed reveal himself to his disciples, did indeed manifest to them his power over death, and did indeed charge them with the mission which was to save the world from destruction, while to civilisation it gave a loftier character, and an end of inconceivable grandeur.

On the Scriptural narrative of this event they do not bear hardly, candidly admitting the greater of

its difficulties; but on the event itself they insist with their most solemn earnestness, holding that without it, Christianity could not have existed, and the life of Christ could not have achieved its purpose.

Christianity is as real to them as it is to the Anglo-Catholic, but while the Anglo-Catholic's first emphasis is laid on obedience to authority, and loyalty to tradition, theirs is laid on moral obedience and spiritual loyalty to the Person of Christ. Religion is not in their judgment a discipline for the legions of humanity, but rather a moral power in the life of the individual person. They insist that a man might accept all the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and yet have neither peace in his heart nor hunger and thirst after righteousness in his soul; whereas the man whose spirit bows itself in unquestioning adoration before the Christ of God, though he understand not one word of theology, may yet find himself in possession of a power which renders him indifferent to his environment, however painful or luxurious, and master of all his passions, however strong or mean.

This concentration on the power of Jesus to save human nature and elevate human character has made Liberal Evangelicalism first and foremost a religion of morals. The man who embraces this faith is

usually very much in earnest, not to escape from doubt and perplexity, but to be rid of the burden of his sins. It is a religion which insists with great firmness on inward veracity, and without setting men to examine themselves with a meticulous care for the smallest and most trivial of faults, forces them to get the intention of the soul right, and the activity of the mind single. A wise sanity and an understanding gentleness, such as command the admiration of men in the parables of Jesus, mark the teaching of this school of thought which has played so great and salutary a part in the forming of English character. If it lacks a sense of the æsthetic values, at least it is an uncompromising enemy of hypocrisy and moral shiftiness. It makes a true man, and a man of dignity and gentleness.

Because it is less picturesque than Anglo-Catholicism, and produces less stir in the world, doing its work in great humbleness and with extreme simplicity, it is sometimes thought to be losing ground, and altogether lacking in that creative enthusiasm which once made it almost the national religion of the English people.

But it is a faith which has the power of reviving with surprising suddenness and energy; and its present disciples claim that the most splendid periods in Roman Catholic history were those in which the moral fervour of practical Evangelicalism

awakened tradition to realise the tragic need of humanity for a Saviour who stood in its midst ready to forgive at the first cry of repentance, and to heal at the first call for help.

CHAPTER V

MODERNISM IN GENERAL

BEFORE attempting to explain the difference which separates the Conservative Modernist from the Left Wing Modernist, it will be useful to define the term *Modernism*, and to furnish a brief summary of its history.

Modernism means the analysis of tradition in the light of accumulated knowledge. It is an attitude of mind on the part of the theologian comparable with that of the philosopher. It represents a respectful attitude towards science, not a contemptuous attitude. Just as a philosopher like Bradley or Bergson examines past philosophies in the light of physical science, to see how far the ideas of such stupendous geniuses as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant can stand the test of definite scientific knowledge, so the modern theologian examines in the same calm and penetrating light the documents of religious tradition.

It may be said with perfect truth that Jesus was the first teacher of Modernism, in that his attitude towards Hebrew tradition was that of a modernist.

The Mosaic tradition was as sacred to the Scribes and Pharisees as the Christian tradition to our own contemporary Roman Catholics or Second Adventists. The whole teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees in the days of Jesus summed itself up in the injunction to keep the Law, and it was confidently believed by every orthodox Jew in those times that only by an absolute and unquestioning obedience to this most sacred Law could the nation hope for the appearance of its long-promised deliverer from heaven. The attitude of Jesus towards this tradition led his friends to think that he was beside himself, and led the Chief Priests, at a later time, to regard him as a dangerous traitor.

But, while it is strictly true to say that the attitude of Jesus towards the Mosaic tradition of the Hebrew people was that of a modernist, it is more convenient for our understanding to consider Modernism entirely from the angle of the present day.

Within the memory of living men there was no choice in religion offered to the inquiring mind except that of accepting the Bible as the inspired Word of God or rejecting it as fable. Men were either Christians or agnostics. They either accepted the creeds and the documents of Christianity, or they stood outside the Church smiling at the superstitious credulity of those who remained within. It was deemed sufficient disproof of Christianity

in those days, which are only the other day, to laugh at the story of Balaam's ass, or the journey of Jonah in the belly of a whale; while to cite such matters as Joshua's moon at Ajalon or the miracle of the loaves and fishes, was considered argument enough to establish the unintelligent character of all religious faith.

In the same way, orthodoxy on its defence argued that Jesus was what he claimed to be, the second Person of a triune God, or he was the greatest impostor who had ever lived.

This spirit, so dangerous and destructive, led a few devoted men to study the Bible with the same honourable desire for truth as that which inspires the critic of philosophy or history, to study it in order that they might see what evidence existed for the unfortunate dogma of verbal inspiration—unfortunate in that it had created an innumerable force of atheism in all civilised nations. These men did not examine Scripture with the idea of destroying its value, but of rescuing it from a dogma concerning it which was plainly fatal to its usefulness.

The first battle between Modernism and orthodoxy was fought over this original question of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. It ended in a complete victory for Modernism. No man made acquainted by this criticism with the many discrepancies in the Bible could ever more ascribe the

authorship of that collection of various writings to the Supreme Being. Orthodox opinion was definitely vanquished, and soon afterwards the faithful were provided with a new interpretation of the phrase "verbal inspiration."

The second battle between Modernism and orthodoxy was fought over the question of the divinity of Christ. Modernism came to the conclusion from a critical examination of Christian documents that Jesus was not born out of the order of nature, that the alleged miracle of the virgin birth was an accretion of later times, and that in any case the matter was not one of vital importance. This battle is not strictly speaking concluded, but so far as the virgin birth is concerned, great numbers of educated Christian people consider that Modernism has won, while Modernism itself is so convinced of this fact that it is now passing to an examination of the early history of the Church and the institution of the Christian Sacraments.

The reader will presently acquaint himself with the reasons which the two schools of Modernism advance for believing in this or that part of the Christian tradition, and for disbelieving in others. But it will be serviceable to him, I think, if a summary is furnished at this point of what I may call the conclusions of Modernism in general. Let him at the outset of this study remind himself that a

less stretch of time separates us from the distant days of William the Conqueror than that which separates the Norman himself from the far days of Jesus; and also let him remind himself that only within the last few years has physical science entirely revolutionised the mind of man regarding the nature of the universe. This thought will warn him that to expect accurate historical statements and adequate metaphysical definitions three centuries before the Fall of the Roman Empire is equivalent to a belief that wireless installations will one day be discovered in the ruins of Pompeii and a dissertation on the action of chloroform or ether in the relics of Kish.

When a modernist speaks of Religion, he does not necessarily mean the Christian Religion. Christianity, to the modernist, is an incident in the history of Religion, and he examines this immemorial history with as close an attention as he gives to the documents of the Christian Faith.

He does not, of course, minimise the place of the Gospel in the history of Religion, but he insists that Christianity can never be understood until it is seen as a development of man's religious consciousness. Mark carefully that he is speaking of "Christianity," not of the teaching of the Personality of Jesus. The religion called Christianity grew out of the teaching of Jesus and set the Personality of Jesus in the

midst of its worship; but it is a religion into which many streams of thought have entered. The Greek philosopher and the Persian priest have contributed far more to the Christian Religion than St. Peter and St. Mark.

One of the ablest of English theologians, the present Dean of King's College, bases the justification for historical criticism on a principle which science has now definitely established—the principle of Continuity. For all practical purposes, he says, our universe is totally different from the universe of our ancestors. It has become inconceivably vaster, and yet everything which occurs in it can be brought under a general law. "The universe, before the eyes of two or three generations, has taken shape as a connected and related whole." The word *continuity*, he thinks, is the key to the modern mind.

The modern mind is able to envisage the life of the human race as one whole, and it is unable to cut off one period of history, or one national story, from the rest. . . . Some historical periods are more significant than others, . . . but there can be no sacred reserve within which the historian must veil his eyes. The Biblical narratives, the Christian origins, the life and teaching of Jesus himself, cannot be discriminated from that which went before, and that which happened elsewhere. The New Tes-

tament itself is, from this point of view, an episode in the unfinished story of man. Influences from the past come to a head in it. It takes its place in the unbroken stream.[1]

Not many years ago, before Materialism received its deathblow as a sufficient philosophy of life, sceptics used to say that religion was the consequence of fear. The primitive savage, hearing the growling thunder, witnessing the havoc of tornado or flood, and mistaking a glint of moonlight for a ghost, prostrated himself on the earth, prayed to imagined gods for mercy, and sought by magic to appease their wrath. Thus came Buddhism, Platonism, and Christianity. In the same way it was argued that modesty in women had its origin in fear of capture by men of another tribe.

The answer made to the sceptic used to take the following form: "The origin of a thing is not important. Shakespeare had to begin by learning the alphabet. You do not distrust astronomy because it began in astrology; nor do you scorn the work of the great chemists because their work grew out of alchemy. Modesty is a positive virtue, and fear no longer enters into it. Religion may have had the humble origin you ascribe to it, but it has outgrown such childish terror, and is now intelligent worship of a God of Love."

[1] *The Gospel and the Modern Mind.* By W. R. Matthews. (Macmillan.)

Thus was scepticism answered only a few years ago. But now scholarship has provided another answer, and one which seems to flash a serviceable light into the darkness of human origins. Professor Rudolf Otto has published a book called *The Idea of the Holy*, a work with which every student of religion should make himself profoundly acquainted. This book has gone through ten editions in Germany and three editions in its English translation. It is a work too closely knit in argument to admit of a summary, but it is possible, I hope, without doing violence to Dr. Otto's balanced reasoning, to indicate one of its valuable lines of inquiry.

The theologian Schleiermacher used to argue, and it was an argument generally accepted in his day, that religious feeling begins with the sense of absolute dependence. It was not terror that made men imagine gods and demons, but a sense in themselves of dependence on invisible powers. From this point he started forward on his journey. But Dr. Otto says this is to start from that which comes second, and from something which is derived from something else. If the savage felt that he was dependent on powers outside himself *there must have been inside himself an element capable of experiencing this sense of dependence.*

Let us get at this element and we shall have our hands on a veritable origin. For to be aware of Something in the universe invisible and beyond com-

prehension argues in the human mind a quality of awareness which must be closely examined. To imagine a ghost or a god is to possess qualities of a unique kind. It is the confession of a creature that he is not a creator. The "creature feeling" could not arise in the mind, unless the Divine was experienced as something close and present.

Augustine was aware of something within himself which answered to the overpowering Something without him. "What is that," he cried, "which gleams through me and smites my heart without wounding it? I am both a-shudder and a-glow. A-shudder in so far as I am unlike it; a-glow in so far as I am like it."

Dr. Otto examines this element in man, and gives it a name. He calls it a numinous element, from the Latin word *numen*, signifying the supernatural power of the divine. In man there is a numinous element whispering to him of a creation and a destiny above physical knowledge, and urging him forward to spiritual adventure in regions which have no existence for lesser creatures.

It is from this inward awareness of the Divine that religious evolution began, and the original fear of the savage, far from being a contemptible state of feeling, shows him to us as a creature infinitely superior to all other creatures—a creature aware in himself of contact with the invisible and the sublime,

terrified at one moment by the overpoweringness of his creator, and at the next approaching Him with symbols and rites in the hope of obtaining His favours.

The importance of this argument may easily be seen. First, it insists that there is in man an inward and unique sense of the divine, that it is an essential part of his nature to be aware of the invisible, and therefore, that religion is as natural to man as science.

Second, it strikes at a spirit in the modern world which is gravely impoverishing human life—the spirit of self-satisfied religious indifference. It gives a new and illuminating significance to the old warning that fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

Nothing, perhaps, is so grotesque, or at any rate offensive, as the easy-going attitude of so many people towards the challenge of the universe. To be terribly at ease in Zion was ridiculous enough; but to live as though the universe has no meaning for the soul of man, and life no other end than the provision of material wants, and as if God can be ignored, or treated with a cool indifference, this would seem to be a misuse of the rational faculties, a perversion of human nature, and a policy of no little danger for nations and states.

How far the Church is responsible for this sort of spiritual braggadocio, how far it has alienated the

sympathy of the modern mind by its refusal to consider the revelation wrought by scientific knowledge and its insistence on the letter of its ancient and pre-scientific formularies, is a question open to debate. The modernist believes the fault to lie, not with the modern man, but with a timorous Church, and the ultimate purpose of his labours is the restoration of the religious principle in the life of the world.

With this fact established, namely, the intelligent origin of religion, we can now turn out attention to the opinions of modern thought concerning the chief doctrines of the Christian religion.

Modern scholarship has decided that the evidence for a supernatural birth in the case of Jesus is as insufficient as it is in all the previous cases cherished by folklore and the mystery religions of ancient times. There are various reasons for this decision, but we must here content ourselves with only a few of them.

The miracle is mentioned solely by two writers, who followed the earlier documents. These two writers, although they record the tradition of a virgin birth, nevertheless trace the genealogy of Jesus back to David through his father, Joseph, in order to establish another claim for him. Jesus himself never referred to such a matter. The rela-

tions and neighbours of Mary could not have spoken about an occurrence so stupendous and awful, or it would have been common property in Galilee, probably in Jerusalem. Mary herself, who had other children, plays no part in the public life of Jesus. The shepherds and the wise men disappear from the stage of history by the door of the stable in Bethlehem, and are never heard of again. St. Paul, the most important Christian witness of the first century, and a man often in the society of the original disciples, never once proclaimed to Greeks and Romans that the Christ who had conquered his heart and subdued his will was born out of the course of nature. Jesus himself never suggested that his mother should be an object of adoration and prayer, or that God had been mindful of her in any unusual manner.

On more general grounds, the critics point out that in its approach towards the mystery religions of that day, Christianity, which was penetrated by Greek philosophy at its outset, and bore a Greek name, and spoke to men in the Greek tongue, would almost inevitably take over and incorporate into itself any elements of the faith it desired to dispossess in order to hasten its own victory. Men who had always celebrated their god's appearance on the earth by a rite in which they ate his flesh and drank his blood would naturally expect a similar ceremony in a

religion which claimed their devotion; and how could men, whose God had been born of a pure virgin in order to manifest His power on earth, give way to a new Son of God who had been born in all the humiliation of natural conception? In those days, we must remind ourselves, woman was regarded as a creature far below man in the scale of being, and was treated with much the same spirit of suspicion and tyranny as that which even now is her portion in eastern countries. Isaiah, we have discovered, did not phophesy that a *virgin* should bear a child; but he did certainly prophesy that a *young woman* should bear a child, and this idea evidently sprang from the distrust and contempt which were then almost universal concerning the adult woman.

Modernism, it will be seen, makes a distinct break between the Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of Christianity. The one is a perfectly human Person, uttering in a Jewish peasant's Aramaic an ethic of extraordinary beauty; the other an entirely metaphysical Figure, clothed in kingly robes, dwelling in mysterious temples, and offering himself to his worshippers in a rite of sacrifice. The one is majestic in simplicity, unique in power, and sublime in character; the other, only a succession of any number of gods in the long calendar of superstition and mythology.

The life of Jesus, as modern thought reveals it to us, is the life of an inspired Person, who brushed on one side the immemorial tradition of sacrificial religions, taught men that God was their loving Father, that the only approach to God was a desire for holiness, and that all the values of the world are false values.

To understand his teaching, and to realise the beauty of his character, it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the age in which he lived. The time was a time of great political and religious excitement. The Jews were struggling to escape from the indignity of their subjection to Rome. They regarded themselves as the Chosen People of the true God, and looked back to a time when God Himself spoke to them by the mouths of His holy prophets. What could they do to re-establish that relation with almighty power? What had they done that God Himself should have broken it?

Two answers were given to this question. The Scribes and Pharisees said that carelessness towards the Law had severed that relation; the Zealots, inspired by Judas of Galilee, that tameness to the insulting degradation of the Roman power had driven God out of their midst. On the one hand was the orthodox party of rigid traditionalists, on the other a physical force party plotting, like the Sinn Feiners

of Ireland, for the overthrow of an imperial power by assassination and rebellion.

Into this time of excitement and expectancy came John the Baptist, preaching the single message of repentance, and preaching it in so original and authoritative a manner that many people believed the time of prophecy had been restored. Jesus was drawn to this vigorous person, submitted to the rite which John imposed on all those who came to him for illumination, and was immediately conscious of a mission.

He retired to a solitary place, underwent a great spiritual experience allegorised for us under the name of the Temptation, and returned to the villages of Galilee with a message which he called Good News, and which struck a mortal blow both at the party of orthodoxy and the party of physical violence.

This message took the form of an announcement. The Kingdom of God was at hand; it was so near that men must instantly prepare for it; the way to prepare for it was neither to follow the traditions of the Scribes, nor to arm in secret with the Zealots, but to accept God's values instead of man's. Humility, for example, was a truer thing, a more lasting thing, than pride; and the simplicities of poverty brought men nearer to the truth of God than the illusions of wealth. To love his enemies was

a greater thing for a man to do than to labour over the minutiæ of the altar. Let Cæsar have his taxes, and God the worship of man's heart. Not what men said and did in public counted in God's sight, but what they desired and really were in the innermost recesses of their hearts. If a man loved mercy and practised charity, if he considered the works of nature rather than the works of man, and if his attitude to God was that of a child towards his father, and if he hungered and thirsted after righteousness, such a man was already a citizen of the coming Kingdom—the Kingdom of God.

When this message was rejected by the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus proclaimed it to the poor and outcasts. He now denounced the Scribes and Pharisees with great force, and directed his teaching with considerable energy against the Zealots. A company of poor people began to follow him about, and by the power of his personality he cured many of them of diseases, chifly due to mental inhibitions. Popularity had no effect upon his soul, and he plainly regarded himself as one who was misunderstood by his generation. Towards the end of his life, he is thought to have told those of his followers who were least likely to misunderstand him, that he himself was that mysterious Son of Man or Messiah, who had been foretold by the prophets as the Saviour of the Chosen People. He was himself

the Messiah. God, he is supposed to have said, had revealed to him the knowledge that the end of the old order was at hand, and had also revealed to him, as the Messiah, that he was to rule over the earth in God's name. The Kingdom of God was not distant and far-off; it was so immediately close that even some of those who were living then would not die before its coming.

The term Messiah, subsequently translated into the Greek word *Christos*, signifying the Anointed One, did not mean, and could not possibly have meant to the Jews, the Person of the Supreme Being. For to the Jew, as to the Mohammedan of the present day, there is no blasphemy so heinous as that which infringes the unbearable oneness of the everlasting Creator of heaven and earth. It meant, so far as we can undersand it, a messenger from this Eternal One God, a spirit of celestial origin, who was nevertheless in his form a Son of Man, and who would appear on the earth, not in the shape of bird, beast, or fish, as idolatrous nations pictured their false gods and false spirits, but in the veritable form of a Son of Man.

It is self-evident that none of the disciples to whom this great secret is said to have been imparted could have understood Jesus, the Son of Joseph the carpenter, to mean that he was God. It was strain enough upon their faith to believe that he could be

the long-promised Messiah, whom, as everyone else imagined, they expected to appear in the form of a conquerer and a king. If they had thought for a moment that he intended to convey to them that he was himself the Eternal Righteousness, the Creator of heaven and earth, it is difficult not to think that they, being Jews, would have stoned him to death, Peter himself taking up the first stone.

Many of the disciples began to doubt him at this time, and he was often sorrowful, and frequently withdrew himself from them to pray in secret. When Peter accepted with momentary conviction the truth of his statement that he was the long-expected Messiah, Jesus expressed his gratitude with unusual warmth. But when he was arrested, after alarming the rich and aristocratic priesthood of Jerusalem by a violent assault on their vested interests, calling them thieves as he overthrew the tables of the money-changers and drove into the street those who were making a profit from the sale of sacrificial doves, Peter, with all the others, forsook him, publicly denied that he had any knowledge of him, and left him to die alone.

Thus, in the opinion of modern criticism, ends the life of Jesus of Galilee; and thus, after a solemn pause, as if the universe itself sorrowed for so tragic an end to such incomparable beauty, Christ appears

upon the stage of history, and takes his place in the affections of a dying world.

The Christ of Christianity is no Galilean peasant wandering over the earth without a home, and without a shelter, with no honour in his own house, with no sympathy either from the orthodox Pharisees or from the zealous patriots of physical violence, and with no other revelation on his lips than the incomprehensible message that men must become as little children and love one another, if they would enter into the secret of God. No; the Christ who takes his place is not even the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Son of Man, but the mystical Word of God, presently the one and only-begotten Son of God, and then God Himself, born of a virgin, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father by Whom all things were made.

It is now known to us that the years immediately before the Fall of Rome were years ridden by horror of sin. The grossest forms of immorality which had ever disgraced mankind, and a gluttonous ostentation of wealth and power which had never disfigured the civilisation of Greece, these things were not merely wearing themselves out, but were reducing their victims to a condition of most abject misery, and in some cases of terror-stricken despair.

Therefore it was that the Greek religion of Chris-

tianity, which assured men of an immediate release from the burden of their iniquities, and which came to them with the sacrificial assurance, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins," easily drew to itself an innumerable host of wretched people, and brought into that dark and dying world a spirit of joy and thanksgiving destined to create an entirely new civilisation.

It is well to remind ourselves that Alaric, the German barbarian who hammered at the gates of Rome and first opened the doors of western civilisation, was a Christian, but a Christian, like the rest of his soldiers, who did not believe that Christ was God. For Arius had not been outvoted by the followers of Athanasius when missionaries from Rome penetrated the dark forests of Germany, with their story of Jesus and a recital of his parables. Nor did the first creed of the Christian religion, drawn up at the order of the Roman Emperor in 325, by a General Council of the Church, the Council in which the party of Arius was outvoted, contain any clause whatever concerning a virgin birth. "The so-called Nicene Creed, and the so-called Apostles' Creed, were unofficial documents composed later in the same century"—that is to say, four hundred years after the death of Jesus.

These things it is necessary to know, and to keep

in mind; for modern thought tells us that if it be challenged by orthodoxy on the ground of tradition, it can produce credentials for its judgments more venerable and infinitely more authentic than those on which orthodoxy itself relies for its claim to the dictatorship of the Christian Faith.

CHAPTER VI

CONSERVATIVE MODERNISM

If the criticism of Christianity which was summarised in the last chapter is a true criticism, what remains of the Christian Faith?

To this question there are two answers. The first is the answer given by those who are called Conservative Modernists, men to be found faithfully acknowledging Christ as their Master in every section of the Catholic Church; and the second, by men who are called Extreme or Left Wing Modernists, most of whom have withdrawn or are withdrawing from the world of institutional religion. We will consider at this point the answers of Conservative Modernism.

What remains of the Christian religion? Everything that is essential. There remains the Fatherhood of God, the Personality of Jesus, the ethic of the Gospel. These things represent the foundational truths of the religion founded by Jesus in the hills and villages of Galilee. He asked men to believe that God is a God of Love, he told them to learn of him how they might find rest for their

souls, and he bade them practise a way of life which proves itself in action to be the Will of God. Criticism, which has destroyed so much, has destroyed not one syllable of this essential Gospel. Jesus not only remains; he remains with a strength not visible to modern eyes while the falsities of superstitions are crowding him in on every side.

In the opinion of Conservative Modernists, something else remains over from the destructive criticism of recent years. Jesus remains, but Christianity remains also.

At first sight the religion named Christianity seems not only different from the ideas of Jesus but at variance with them. Examine it more patiently, however, and there discloses itself, in the midst of all its traditions and ceremonial, the central idea of Jesus—individual moral responsibility and direct communion of the soul with God. The Church has added to itself many things which are contrary to the teaching of Jesus; but it has preserved at its very centre the Character of its Master, and it has never ceased to propagate his ethic among the generations of men.

Just as the Character of Jesus stands out with greater strength and stronger beauty when the false accretions of his superstitious followers are removed from him, so the Church of Christ is seen to be the noblest and most beneficent structure standing in

the midst of humanity when the additions of mistaken fervour and devout ignorance are cleared away from it.

Let us see in some detail how the Conservative Modernists regard these two great matters, the historic Jesus, and the Church of Christianity.

It may be true, they say, that Jesus was mistaken in his mission, that the end of the world, to which he looked forward, was different from the end which actually came, and that much of his legislation, being legislation for a world which was coming to an end, is not applicable to the world of a progressive civilisation. But it is necessary for us, as the Higher Critics have always taught, to distinguish between those things which Jesus really did say, and those things which tradition credits him with saying. For example, it is generally agreed that the great teaching of Jesus is contained in the discourse usually called the Sermon on the Mount. No man fairly reading that collection of beautiful sayings can affirm that it is the utterance of a frenzied mind. Serenity is its tone from beginning to end, a serenity never to be found in the writings of St. Paul. Therefore, if we are to agree that Jesus expected the end of that age to come in his lifetime, and to come with mysterious accompaniments, at least we must concede that he waited for

that extraordinary event with an extraordinary calm.

Are we quite sure, then, that the more excitable utterances on the coming judgment which we find in the Gospels were spoken by Jesus himself? One thing we are all clearly agreed upon, that he was misunderstood by his disciples. May they not have misunderstood him even in this matter of the end of the world? And when he was taken from them, and they were struggling with great difficulty to exist as a body of communists, may they not have added to the first written record of Christian experience a certain vigour of language not sanctioned by oral tradition, but likely to convince sceptical others that the return of Christ to the earth was a matter of only a little time?

But, say the Conservative Modernists, let us grant freely that Jesus was himself mistaken in this particular; are we also to affirm that the spirit of so unique a Person ceased to understand the true purpose of God with his death? or after his death remained aloof from humanity, cherishing at some distant point in the universe and in unrepentant sullenness a notion which time had proved to be false? Is it not a more rational conclusion, if we accept the spiritual interpretation of the universe, to believe that Jesus would grow in knowledge and in power, and because of his great love for the human race would continue to serve it?

Or, if this be deemed too great an exercise for human faith, let us restrict ourselves to the earth, and ask why it should be said that the revelation of Jesus was final? No form of knowledge is final. Every other branch of science grows and develops. Religions which remain rooted to persons or events in the far past of humanity punish their victims by an apathy of mind which is fatal both to the rational faculties and to human dignity. If astronomy is to grow, and chemistry, and physiology, and biology, and anthropology, and, as we ourselves are the first to argue, theology, why is not the religion of Jesus to grow also?

Is it not significant, asks Dr. W. R. Matthews, that the prophets are never theologians? "They deliver, not abstract truth, but guidance for the concrete moral situation. They declare, not doctrine, but the will of God." [1]

For the sake of this argument, they will say, we are ready to accept every criticism which reveals Jesus to our modern eyes as a man, and as a man who was in some particulars mistaken about himself and his mission. But we insist that the spiritual consciousness of man, the numinous element in his soul, can nevertheless take the Character of Jesus and his ethic into itself, and shape them into a true religion, making that religion the most powerful weapon of progress in the world.

[1] *The Idea of Revelation.* (Longmans.)

You say there is a gulf fixed between Jesus and Christianity. We reply, In our judgment a bridge was thrown across that gulf by the inspired genius of St. Paul and St. John. You tell us that it is impossible to suppose that Jesus instituted sacraments, seeing that the very centre of his teaching was the direct relation of the individual soul with God. We accept that criticism; but we insist that the Church was divinely inspired to institute the great rite of Holy Communion, and that this great rite of Holy Communion, stripped of superstition and barbarous accretions, is the noblest act of symbolism in the service of institutional religion and a most powerful help to private devotion.

You say that Jesus legislated for a world which he believed to be perishing, and therefore that his legislation cannot apply to a world which is rightly set on achieving its own social and political salvation. We agree again. We say that much of the teaching of Jesus, as it is recorded in the Gospels, is the teaching of a world-renouncing religion, and that humanity is a world-affirming body, united in nothing more closely than its resolute intention to wrest from nature her hidden secrets, and to establish man's dominion over the earth. We perfectly agree. But has not the Church adapted herself to this position, and has she not given to mankind an ideal of conduct which stands perfectly between the

two dangerous extremes of asceticism and worldliness?

Is the progress of humanity more truly served by those who say, Let us eat, drink, and be merry! than it is by those who creep away from its duties and pleasures, either to worship God in a kind of sick terror, or to develop a morbid perversion of individualism? Is it not true, as one has said, that the man of the world is the worst enemy of the world? And is it not equally true that the best friend of the world is the man who follows the ethic of Jesus, and keeps in his soul as its standard and measure of all things the Personality of Christ?

At this point the Conservative Modernists begin the speak of a matter which is not often considered by the critics of tradition, namely, Christian experience. They claim that Christian experience, continuing down the ages since the days of Jesus, is as great a fact as anything in human knowledge. They claim that out of this experience has come the great movement of mankind from cruelty, injustice, vainglory, and self-seeking, and on towards a social conscience in the community and self-sacrifice in the individual, which is called Christian civilisation. And they say that the men and women who have done most to give this saving character to the movement of western progress are men and women who were awakened to idealism by the Personality

of Jesus, and who tell us with absolute conviction that they were conscious in all their activities of his presence and his power. Moreover, they challenge their critics to declare how civilisation can avoid the destructions of materialism if the Personality of Christ be dismissed as a legend, and humanity resigns its future into the hands of political economists.

If these Conservative Modernists were to summarise their faith for us they would say: We believe that Jesus was the Christ of God, that he came into the world to save the world, that the world failed to understand him, that he was crucified, and died, and was buried, that he manifested himself to his disciples after death, that he manifested himself to St. Paul in the same manner, that he inspired those in Corinth and Antioch, who broke the tie with Judaism, and that the Spirit of God which was with him as in no other has continued to inspire all those who in the ages since his day have endeavoured with entire sincerity of heart to follow in his steps; and we believe that this Spirit of God will continue to inspire the Church of Christ, until truth prevails over error, and the Light of God has swallowed up the darkness of men.

Traditionalists mock at this creed of Conservative Modernism, and only those who are in the most advanced school of Liberal Evangelicalism are disposed to receive Conservative Modernists with

any show of Christian charity. But the whole future of organised Christianity, it would seem, hangs upon the issue of this internecine strife; for if Orthodoxy is the more numerous, and by far the richest body in the Church, advancing time, as the modernists claim, is on the side of science, and that is a flood which bears man far from all his ancient moorings.

Conservative Modernism, we must learn to understand, is insistent on its right to believe in Jesus as the Christ of God, and to resist many of the interpretations which Left Wing Modernism gives to the findings of criticism.

It is impossible not to believe, they say, that Jesus regarded the Kingdom of God as a thing already come to earth, and come to earth in his own Person. Many had said that it would come some day; a few had even said that it was about to come. But Jesus alone declared, *The Kingdom of God is among you.*

Observe too, they say, that in all the utterances and actions of Jesus, there is nothing which suggests that he shared man's burden of guilt, or that he was subject to any of those temptations which are general to the human race. He was conscious, as no other man has ever been, of communion with God. He spoke with such authority about the Will of God that we feel he is charged with a divine mandate. In him the rule of God was really abso-

lute and "the Son was never conscious of separation from the Father." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. . . . But I say unto you. . . ." "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." "I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The primitive Gospel, it has been well said, is this filial consciousness of Jesus. In him "there steps out into history the man who, in his own conviction, units God and man. . . . He knows God not by the hearing of the ear, but by the most uninterrupted communion, and, therefore, he is able to reveal the nature of God. . . . The Kingdom, which means the rule of God, is coming, but it is also here in the life and consciousness of Jesus who is its inaugurator. All his actions are in harmony with the claim. He legislates for the Kingdom. He speaks for God. . . . In Jesus' own view there was no limit to his significance for the world, no limit to his authority over men's consciences." [1]

Conservative Modernism accepts the Church of Christ, but does not identify the Gospel with Christian institutions:

[1] *The Gospel of the Modern Mind.* By W. R. Matthews. (Macmillan.)

. . . The Gospel requires both Church and sacraments for its expression, but it is necessary to realise that they are the instruments of the Gospel, not part of it. They are the creations of the message, not the message itself. This principle is confirmed when we observe the unecclesiastical nature of the teaching of Jesus. When we speak of the Gospel we are speaking of something prior to organisation and institution.

Read the Gospel of Mark and then the Epistle to the Romans, and you will perceive at once that you have passed into a new mental climate. . . . What is the central idea in the teaching of Jesus? As we have seen, it is the Kingdom of God. But when we turn to the other writings of the New Testament, we find that the phrase has almost disappeared.

What, again, is the predominant interest for us as we read the Gospels? It is the disclosure of the religion of Jesus, his communion with the Father, his words about the true life. What is the central interest of St. John and St. Paul? Not what Jesus thought of God, but what we are to think of Jesus. . . . The centre has shifted.[1]

But, say these thinkers, let us be careful to distinguish between a development of the message and its perversion. Jesus himself did unquestionably lay down his life with a purpose. He might easily have remained in the hills of Galilee teaching those

[1] *Ibid.*

who came to him the way of love, illustrating in his own life the beautiful parable of the Sower. But he began to utter dark sayings, and to associate himself with the sadder aspects of prophecy. The shadow of the Man of Sorrows falls across the unbroken radiance of his serenity. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die, it remaineth by itself alone, but if it die it beareth much fruit."

"It seems," says Dr. Matthews, "that the last journey to Jerusalem was made with the intention of challenging the powers of evil to do their worst. Jesus strode before his disciples like one impatient to fulfil a dreadful mission; and they were afraid to speak to him."

Is it any wonder that later apostles should see in this act of voluntary sacrifice, undertaken that men might be drawn by it into the Kingdom of God, a fulfilment of ancient prophecy and an explanation of all mystery religions? And is it not even strictly true to say that by this act of selfless love, the most completely selfless act in the history of the world—seeing that Jesus laid down his life for his enemies as well as for his friends, seeing too that the sinless and holy one suffered for the basest sinners of mankind, as well as for the sad and unhappy—he became the redeemer of the world?

So long as we realise that the apostles would

naturally be preoccupied with the mystery of the nature of Jesus, and that their missionary enthusiasm would as naturaly flow into the strong current of sacrificial religion, we shall not look to them for the actual Gospel of the Master whose love and resurrection had overwhelmed them.

And, so long as we realise that the Church naturally emphasises the uniqueness of Jesus, and as naturally lays its main emphasis on the sacrifice of his life for the salvation of mankind, we shall not look to it for that simplicity of the Gospel which was and is its central importance.

The germ of the Gospel has been discovered. It is the consciousness of Jesus, a consciousness of unbroken communion with God, and therefore a revelation of the divine nature and will. It is the message of the potential sonship of every human being. It is the assurance that the divine life in humanity consists primarily not in power or wisdom of intellect, but in love and purity of heart, and the will to serve which encounters suffering, if need be, for the good of the brotherhood.

In a true sense Jesus himself is the whole Gospel and his word, *Follow me*, the whole of the Christian Religion—the rest is comment.[1]

Let us now suppose, for the sake of contrast, that a man, anxious for religious certainty, approaches the orthodox, and asks them, "Do you believe that

[1] *The Gospel and the Modern Mind.* By W. R. Matthews. (Macmillan.)

Adam sinned, and so expatriated himself out of the love of God?"

"We believe," they would answer, "that at some remote period in the history of the world, humanity chose a course of life in which it was difficult, if not impossible, for God to co-operate. That is to say, man attempted to live by bread alone. God did not withdraw the divine aid, but man decided to do without it. The sun does not cease to shine when we draw down the blind; but it cannot enter a room in which the blind is drawn."

"And to put this state of things right, you believe that God became incarnate, and dwelt among men?"

"We believe that the Son of God became flesh and took our nature upon him, and so once more brought the creature Man into communion with the Creator."

"You believe Christ was born out of the order of nature?"

"We do not understand the doctrine of the virgin birth, nor did those men understand it, who first made so great and compassionate a miracle an essential doctrine of the Christian Religion. But we hold it, just as they who created the civilisation of Europe held it, and we see no reason why this generation should not also accept it. It is one of the Christian mysteries, and therefore to be accepted as a mystery."

"You think it essential?"

"Absolutely essential."

"It is not mentioned in the earliest of the Gospels. Christ himself made no reference to such a matter."

"Do you not perceive the importance of this doctrine? It guards the divinity of Christ. It defends him against those who would set him in the company of Buddha and Mohammed. What we offer men is not the moral ideas of an interesting teacher, but the divine revelation of God's Love. Deny this doctrine of the virgin birth, and what is the authority of Jesus? He becomes a man not to be distinguished from Socrates or Confucius, a man whose teaching you may believe, or not, just as it pleases you. Think what that would mean to mankind. The Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit, guarded the world from a disaster so calamitous."

"You believe, too, that as the last act of his life, he instituted the Sacrament of the Mass, or, as some call it, Holy Communion?"

"Yes."

"You do not think it strange that he should conclude a life devoted to teaching men to pray quite simply and directly to their Father in Heaven by instituting a most solemn and mysterious rite to be celebrated only by an ordained priesthood?"

"That sacrament is the centre of the Christian Religion. The Christian Religion is not to be conceived of without it. Yes, we believe, and believe

most passionately, that Christ himself instituted the Sacrament of the Mass. And we are prepared to meet the challenge of the whole world on this very ground. Look at the Nonconformist Churches. This is an age which is supposed to be antagonistic to priestly assumptions and antipathetic to the Mystery of the Altar. Well, the Nonconformist Churches, which attach so little importance to these matters, are, on their own confession, losing ground. If Christ did not institute this great Sacrament, why are not his disciples flocking to the cold puritanism of the chapel? If he was not divine, why are not the triumphant Unitarians building churches and cathedrals for God's faithful children? One answer to your question is the movement of humanity away from the chapel. The other is the devotion of Christ's children in all parts of the world to this central rite of the Christian Religion. Down the ages it has come, sacred with a thousand memories and a thousand triumphs over the enemies of God, and down the ages it will continue until the world is Christ's."

"Then you have no concession to make to the modern mind?"

"None whatever," answer the orthodox; "and moreover, we refuse to consider seriously so outrageous a term. Who has made this generation a judge of all truth, and where is the philosopher who will define for us the meaning of your term?

One of the ablest of the modernists has said, *'The mind of man is always changing on the surface, but in its deep springs it does not change.'* We accept that teaching, and we act on it. Our Christ is One Who looks below the surface; and every man aware of the deep springs in his nature knows, if he thinks at all, that he has need of a Saviour and a Redeemer. The present age may laugh and dance, and eat and drink, and tell itself that it is happy, and even feel that it is self-sufficient, but the fashion of this world passes away. There will come an awakening. Sodom and Gomorrah thought their philosophy would last. Babylon believed that she had true wisdom. Rome and Carthage deemed themselves immortal. Be assured the world will come back to the true faith, crawling forth from the ruins of 'the modern mind,' aware once more that God has made us for Himself, and that the heart of man cannot rest until it rests in Him."

However much those who believe that the Church, in the interest of the Christian Religion, should alter her phraseology, and restate her central doctrines in terms of modern knowledge—however much such persons may lament this unalterable attitude of the orthodox, they will not, I think, be able to withhold a certain measure of admiration from devotion so sincere and faith so passionate.

And it is necessary to say again that those who hold the ancient tradition of the Christian Faith

are also foremost in maintaining the great example of the Church in works of devotion and charity. Wherever a man may go in this country, if he takes the trouble to look below the surface of social life, he will there surely find the followers of the Orthodox Faith visiting the sick and sorrowful, ministering to fatherless children, rescuing the drunkard and the harlot, binding the youth of the nation into companionships of high ethical value, and challenging at every point the destructive teachings of disruptive materialism.

One thing is certain about this Christian Religion, that it inspires men to sacrifice themselves for others, not in splendid and heroic moments only, but steadily and sturdily all the day long.

But if Orthodoxy makes claims which scholarship proves to be false, and if it continue to mistake an obscurantist mood for an intellectual attitude, then it is certain that it will lose power, and, what is far worse, hinder the true work of God.

The orthodox say to mankind: "Here are the documents of the Christian Religion, and here are the formularies of the Christian Church; take them or leave them." That is not the spirit of an apostle, but the arrogance of a dictator.

The modernist says: "Here are the conclusions of physical science and the findings of competent

criticism. Let us see what bearing they have on our theory of existence."

Certain of the orthodox say: "We are willing to use our reason as far as it can take us; but we recognise that there is a point at which reason breaks down, and from which instinct, feeling, and imagination must carry the soul forward to reality." The modernist says: "I agree that instinct, feeling, and imagination play a great and extensive part in the life of the soul; but I think it is our duty to check all their movements by reference to reason, which is the supreme quality of man's spirit, distinguishing him from other creatures."

When the die-hards of tradition denounce or deride science, the modernist reminds them that they go to the oculist if their eyes trouble them, consult physicians and surgeons if their bodies are afflicted with illness, and make use of the many inventions of modern civilsation, from the steamship to the telephone, when they wish to hasten their business or better their conditions.

Moreover, the modernist points out to the orthodox that if the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, and the African negro adopted to their inherited faith the same uncompromising attitude which the orthodox maintain towards the Christian Faith, it would be impossible for Christ to become the Light of the World.

The difference between these two schools may be conveniently expressed in the following phrase: To the orthodox the Christian Religion is a revelation from the Most High God, an act of the divine grace to be accepted on bended knees and with bowed head, the heart overflowing with gratitude. To the modernist the Christian Religion, like all other religions and all other philosophies, is, at any rate, a theory of existence, and therefore, like all theories of life's mystery, must be constantly tested by reference to the increasing achievements of human knowledge.

The modernist does not deny that the Christian Religion is a revelation; but he distinguishes the revelation itself from the manner of its presentation to mankind, and seeks reverently and earnestly to criticise this presentment in the light of scientific knowledge. Moreover, he insists that revelation moves with the spiritual and intellectual progress of mankind, and will continue to reveal with more power and more lucidity the Will of the Father.

His object is not to defend the Christian Religion from attack, but the better to understand the character of its revelation. He acts in this matter on the warning of Pascal: "Two extravagances: To exclude Reason, to admit only Reason." To his studies he brings both a qualified mind and a devout spirit.

And, as we have now seen, certain modernists

are convinced that the most searching criticism of the Christian tradition touches nothing that is vital, and removes only those articles of faith which have always troubled the minds of thoughtful men from the earliest ages of Christianity—articles of faith which are rather an unbearable strain upon the intellectual conscience than an aid to the worship and understanding of the heart.

This conviction should be kept in mind when we turn the page and give our attention to the sterner accents of Modernism. For if we would understand this whole matter, it is necessary to prepare ourselves for the vigorous blows of the radical reformer, and to consider, in place of the accommodating compromises of the conservative mind, even the pronouncement that institutional religion is a hindrance to the spiritual progress of mankind, an enemy of truth, and therefore should be abandoned.

CHAPTER VII

LEFT WING MODERNISTS

How can the Church expect to obtain the attention of men, asks the extreme school of modernists, so long as she behaves herself in a fashion which makes it impossible for them even to respect her? It is because she is shuffling with truth, because she is consciously practising dishonesty, and because she is a coward, that men turn away from her with a sort of sick disgust.

These modernists say that the sooner such a Church falls into ruin, leaving man to establish a new and truer relation with the spiritual forces of the universe, the better will it be for the higher interests of civilisation. Jesus himself has warned us, they say, of what happens when the blind presume to lead the blind. No greater denunciation fell from his lips than that with which he passed judgment on the Scribes and Pharises: "Ye are the children of them which killed the prophets."

An extreme modernist would tell us that the established fact of evolution has shattered the whole fabric of the old theology. It is now, in his opin-

ion, no more possible for an educated person, who is honest with himself, to believe in that old theology than it is possible for the Astronomer Royal to believe in the guesses of Ptolemy. Everything in the beliefs of man has been affected in a greater or less degree by the establishd fact of evolution; but in this new and searching light of evolution the central dogma of the old theology has clean disappeared out of human thinking. That dogma, central to the old theology and foundational to the entire fabric of orthodox Christianity, concerns the question of sin.

Men no longer believe that God created a perfect pair of human beings who sinned themselves out of His love and brought the penalty of death upon their countless posterity. Evolution entirely forbids this foundational dogma of orthodox religion. It is not scepticism that rejects it, but definite knowledge. Scepticism did not reject the notion that the earth is flat and that the sun rises and sets at its stationary borders; knowledge brushed this false notion out of the human mind with a truth more astounding and more majestical.

In the same way evolution not only gets rid of Adam and Eve, but replaces that charming and naïve legend with a truth of noble significance. It teaches us to contemplate our earliest ancestors, struggling with their environment and achieving,

after myriads of years, because they were so impelled by their own nature, the miracle of Personality. We are to see those ancestors not as guilty criminals on whom the maledictions of humanity may justly fall, but as the parents of all human striving, all human aspiration, all human achievement. Because they would not be beast-like, we are no longer numbered among the beasts of the field; and because they looked about them with inquiring and courageous eyes, conscious of a mysterious challenge in the universe, man is no longer the cowering slave of environment, but its calm and attentive master.

Thus it is quite out of the question, says the extreme modernist, to expect men of the present generation, whose entire thinking is governed by this idea of evolution, to accept the pre-scientific teaching of the Church that Christ was, and is, a sacrifice for sin, and by his death upon the cross made atonement to God for the sins of the whole world. However tenaciously the orthodox Christian may cling to this teaching, it is perishing out of human knowledge, and can never again be revived in the minds of men. The whole idea of the Atonement must go before the modern man will once more give his attention to the Personality of Jesus and once more study his teaching with the devotion that enlightens the mind and enlists the soul in his service.

The modernist reminds the orthodox Christian that "in the Revised Version of the New Testament, which represents mature, accepted, and conservative scholarship and orthodoxy, the word *atonement* is no longer to be found. *Its connotation is now quite misleading.*" Therefore without doing violence both to the Scriptures and to science, Christ can no longer be proclaimed to men as "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." To continue to make that proclamation, says the modernist, is not only dishonest but is most wickedly and dangerously to misrepresent the creative moral teaching of Jesus.

What, then, are we to think of sin, we who remain outside the disputations of theologians, and remember the teaching of Orthodoxy that those who sin go to a place of everlasting torment?

The modernist tells us that evolution reveals sin to our eyes in an entirely new light, but that in this light it still bears the character given to it by the Christian religion of "disobedience to God." Sin, he says, is a reversion by the creature man to the beast level from which the strivings of a divine aspiration have rescued him. Once he was indeed "sinless," but that was when his place in creation lay among the brutes. Directly he had become Personality he sinned whenever he ceased

to strive upward, for by his sinning he hindered the progress of the human race, and so frustrated the Will of God. It is the Will of God that man should achieve perfection: the way of perfection is the way of moral progress; therefore whenever man ceases to strive after moral power he is false to the divine character of his nature, and becomes not only his own worst enemy, but an enemy of the human race.

Not long ago the modernist was a little disposed to make light of sin. He saw this rebellion of the creature man as a weakness, or as something to be expected in the progress of humanity from barbarism to civilisation. He made no reference to the idea of hell, except to explain away from literalism the allegorical language of Jesus concerning its torments. But now I discover among men of this school not only a disposition to see a grave seriousness in sin, but a disposition to revive the Church's stern warnings for the sinner. In other words, the modernist is beginning to see that human evolution is threatened by the world's increasing tolerance for sin, and that what the world accepts good-naturedly as mere "moral slackness" may fatally weaken the civilisation of Christendom.

Was not the late war, with its inexpressible anguish, its devilish brutalities, and its unutterable waste of young life, a consequence of sin—a con-

sequence of German militarism, national vainglory, racial animosities, commercial rivalries, and a denial of the law of love? European civilisation is Christian civilisation, and Christian civilisation denies its origin and degrades its purpose whenever it ceases to strive after peace, good-will, co-operation, and unselfish love.

This point of view is suggested by Canon J. M. Wilson in the concluding chapter of a collective work entitled, *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge*. He says:

The obvious way to regard sin in the light of evolution is as a survival and rebellion of the animal and lower elements in man, after the emergence of those higher moral and spiritual elements in him which make him human, and have begun to claim control. In all spheres evolution involves struggle. . . . The struggle is recognised by St. Paul: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." This struggle is recognised by evolutionists. "Let us understand once for all," writes Huxley, "that the ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it."

Huxley also said that the supreme faculty which constitutes the essential "nature" of man demands absolute submission to the behests of the supreme good. "It is this," he said, "which commands all men to love one another, to return good for

evil, to regard one another as fellow-citizens of one great State."

This more serious view of sin enables the modernist to accept the definition of Jesus as a Saviour and Redeemer. By his life and by his teaching Jesus more than any other revealer of God's Will has encouraged men to continue the great strife of evolution, the warfare on which human progress absolutely depends. Moreover, love of his Personality lifts the moral struggle on to the spiritual plane, and sets men who are free from base sins to hunger and thirst after righteousness, enabling them to understand the call "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." Salvation has now come to mean in the mind of the modernist not salvation from the *penalty* of sin, as Canon Wilson says, but salvation from sin itself.

But is there a penalty for sin? If a man makes light of those tremendous strivings of the past which have given him self-consciousness, a moral nature, and personality; if he wilfully and deliberately ceases to strive, and wilfully and deliberately drags others with him to the brute, what happens to him?

To this question the modernist is not yet ready, so far as I have discovered, with a dogmatic answer. But he is by no means afraid to say that the law of retribution, visible in its operations here upon earth, is probably in operation beyond the

reach of human vision. There is some reason to suppose, he thinks, from the utterances of Jesus and the warnings of St. Paul, that the ultimate end of sin is annihilation of the soul, but before such an end is reached, the death and extinction of so wonderful a thing as Personality, much suffering and anguish is likely to be incurred by the creature that has deliberately misused so great a gift.

To misuse a talent, to misuse wealth and power, to misuse opportunities, and to misuse natural instincts is, in the light of evolution, to sin. All sin, in fact, is a misuse of gifts and becomes a perversion of man's moral nature. He is a creature who must strive and aspire if he is to fulfil the promise of evolution. When he ceases to strive and ceases to aspire, he is a coward; when he embraces with his spiritual nature the things of the animal he is a renegade.

John Wesley said that "the Fall of Man was the very foundation of revealed religion; and that if it were taken away the Christian system is subverted." In the same spirit orthodox Christians believe that the virgin birth is the very foundation of Christ's divinity, and that if it is taken away the Christian Religion must perish.

The modernists answer that the Fall of Man has been taken away, not only without involving the

collapse of the Christian system, but to its great advantage.

Convinced by science that the key to an understanding of the physical universe is the law of continuity, the modernist approaches the mysteries and miracles of Christianity with the faith in his mind that they are explicable to human understanding. Religion, he says, was made for man, not man for religion. God is not playing a game of hide-and-seek with humanity, but is in and with humanity drawing it towards the ultimate perfection of creation. Where the orthodox Christian bows his head, veils his eyes, and orders his reason to be still, the modernist becomes particularly attentive with the full force of his intelligence.

To convince orthodox Christians that they are labouring under a delusion the modernist invites them to consider Jesus of Nazareth as one Person, and the Christ of traditional theology as another. They will find, if they faithfully compare the Christ of traditional theology with the historical Jesus, that the two Persons are not only strangely different, but at some points in complete disagreement.

The characteristic of Jesus is simplicity. He spoke in parables, but his parables are so simple that a child can understand them, so endearing that the world has taken them to its heart, and so illuminating that in their light the greatest scholars catch

glimpses of the divine not to be won from the laboured works of any philosopher or the inspired words of any poet.

The complex and mysterious subject of Religion Jesus reduced to two simple commands, love of God and love of man. All the barriers erected by past priestcrafts between God and man were thrown down by his teaching that men were to think of themselves as sons of God, children of a Heavenly Father, and were to pray to Him as "Our Father." He never said one word in proclaiming his good tidings to the world—good tidings which were to revolutionise the whole movement of human life—which a child could not understand.

Now compare this Jesus of history with the Christ of traditional theology, the Christ who emerged from the ruins of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, and slowly became the object of European worship, the centre of theological controversy. The modernist says that he bears a Greek name, Christos, and a Greek title, Kyrios, and goes to men, this Lord Christ, not with the Sermon on the Mount, but with the metaphysics of Plato, clothed in the garments of a priest, offering the sacrifice of Mithras, tolerating and sanctioning, and incorporating into his worship Greco-Asiatic cults, which were fatal to moral grandeur and destructive of intellectual vigour. He conquers the

world, but his conquest is a blight that falls upon Europe for a thousand years, like a great darkness.

Not till the revival of learning, say the modernists, and then only among certain nations, did the human spirit break free from the prison-house of this Greek Christos, and return to the simplicities of Jesus. As soon as the language of the Gospel passed into the currency of common speech there was a resurgence of life in Europe and a new energy in morality. Those countries, however, which remained faithful to the Christ of tradition made no sign of a new moral energy, and to this day Catholic nations, the most illiterate in Europe, tolerate conditions in their prisons which are inhuman, and cruelty to animals which other nations punish as a crime.

The Puritan movement in England, despite its many extravagances, restored the full authority of Jesus as a moral teacher. Wesley took up the Puritan revival in the eighteenth century, and turned the current of English life into a new channel of moral realism. From his day onward English thought has been haunted by the moral teachings of Jesus. Individual philanthropy passed into the nation, and became what we call the social conscience. Men were, and are, ashamed of a greed which exploits others, and of conditions which are a hindrance to the development of mind and body. At the present moment, under the same influence,

they are beginning to see that without the moral activity of good-will the whole fabric of their economic existence must fall into ruins. All this is the work, not of a Greco-Syrian theology, but of the Character of Jesus.

When the Anglo-Catholic speaks with confidence of his tradition, a tradition absolutely founded upon an historical Person, the critics ask him if he realises that the Jesus of history is a different person from the Christ of Roman Christianity. For example:

> The Church conquered the world by offering salvation through a redeeming Lord. Jesus made no such offer: to him the Kingdom of God, the pearl of great price, was the natural inheritance of men, if they would only take it. . . . Probably it was not unique teaching: it is very hard to obey, and it makes no spectacular demands. . . . It did not conquer the world. Nor did Jesus—the Jesus of history—think that it would do so. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it."
>
> Not the men who had known Jesus, but those who had not, converted the Roman Empire, and their Gospel was that of the Cross, Resurrection, and Parousia, not the Sermon on the Mount, or an ethical interpretation of the Parables, or a moral *imitatio Christi*.
>
> . . . Catholic Christianity conquered because it was popular, not because it was true, and failed for the same reason. Permanence, not popularity, is the test of truth.

Men who habitually use their powers in order to circumvent either conscience or reason in the end find they are unable to use them at all. The distinction between right and wrong disappears when conscience dies, and that between fact and fiction when reason is neglected. The one is the danger which besets clever politicians, the other the nemesis which waits on popular preachers.[1]

This same school of Modernism rejects the sacrament of the Eucharist. It tells us that to discover the origin of almost every traditional idea in Christianity is to free ourselves from the illusion of its value. Because the phrase *good news* was translated into the word *gospel*, centuries of Christians believed that Jesus used the term of himself, and that the Gospel of Christ meant faith in his sacrifice for the sins of the world. Obviously, as Jesus used the words, their signification referred to the near approach of the Kingdom of God. The whole of his message is summed up in the epitome of Mark: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; repent, and believe the good news."

It is the same with the sacrament of the Mass. What is the historic origin of that rite? Consider these two texts:

For as touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were

[1] *Landmarks of Early Christianity.* By Kirsopp Lake. (Macmillan.)

made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance (Heb. vi. 4-8).

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries (Heb. x. 26).

Sinlessness was supposed to follow baptism. It was an absolute characteristic of the Messianic kingdom. "In His priesthood shall sin come to an end." "And He made for all His works a new and righteous nature, so that they should not sin in their whole nature for ever, but should all be righteous each in his kind alway." It was not difficult for the first Christians, who were hourly expecting the return of their Master, to refrain from sin. They gave up their property, and they abandoned their vices. But when the coming was delayed sin returned, and the Church was presented with a problem which it had to face or to perish—the sinning of those who had been washed white by the infinitely solemn rite of baptism.

This problem was solved by the Eucharist. In Mark we read, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many"; but later, in Matthew, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

It is as nearly certain as anything can be that the earliest view of the Eurcharist did not regard it as a means of obtaining forgiveness of sins. . . . May we not see some plausibility in the suggestion that the problem of sin after baptism tended to give a changed importance to the Eucharist, and that the Matthean text—as contrasted with Mark—shows the change?

The Johannine Epistles show the beginning of the distinction between venial and deadly sin, which is such an important feature of the later casuistry, and of the propitiatory function of the risen Christ, which is essential to the Mass.[1]

We must remember, says the same writer in *Landmarks of Early Christianity*, that in general all the mystery religions of that time assumed the existence of a Lord, who had passed through various experiences on earth, and finally been glorified and exalted. "He had left behind the secret of obtaining the same reward, in the form partly of knowledge, partly of magical ceremonies. His followers knew this secret, and admitted into it those whom the Lord was willing to accept. The initiated obtained protection in this world, and a blessed immortality after death."

With these things in mind, the modernist urges the orthodox Christian to abandon positions which are not only revealed by science to be untenable,

[1] *The Stewardship of Faith.* By Kirsopp Lake. (Christophers.)

but from which no valid service can be rendered to the cause of advancing humanity.

The need of humanity is not to be deceived into the destructive delusion that the duty of its moral struggle has been done for it, but rather to be forced to face the tremendous responsibility of every soldier of God to do his duty in the face of a dangerous enemy. If orthodox Christianity had succeeded in producing the highest type of man, and Christians of the present time were of too noble a moral stature to sin with the ruck, then we might accept the Church as an inspired institution, however pagan its origin. But the failure of Christianity is the low quality of the average Christian.

Again, to hold that Jesus definitely identified himself, either with the Davidic Messiah or the Son of Man described in the Book of Enoch is to imperil, not to safeguard, the good news of Christianity; for "both of these are part of a general view of the universe and especially of a prognostication of the future, wholly different from our own, and quite incredible to modern minds. How do we endanger Christianity by doubting that Jesus identified himself with figures central in incredible and now almost universally abandoned forms of thought?" [1]

[1] *Landmarks of Early Christianity.* By Kirsopp Lake. (Macmillan.)

Is it not our greatest need to simplify the confusions of theology, and to get back to the one condition of Jesus for entering the Kingdom—repentance and moral effort? "We have had prisons, informations, bulls, and burnings," said Erasmus; "and what has come of them? Outcries enough; but no crying to Christ. Christ will not wake till we call to him in sincerity of heart. Then he will arise and bid the sea be still, and there will be a great calm. . . . See what the world is coming to—rapine, murder, plague, famine, rebellion; *no one trying to mend his own life.*"

The Church, said Donald Hankey, is "all of a muddle." On every question men are calling each other "obscurantists," "traitors," "heretics," "schismatics," "Laodiceans," "fanatics." "Why should every child that comes to school to learn how to be a child of God be dragged into the controversy? Why should every simple workman who comes to church to worship God be involved in these unprofitable complications?"

There is no getting out of it, they are involved. Every child who is taught the Book of Genesis as part of his religious education is predestined to an eventual plunge into the murky waters of controversy. Every workman who comes to church and sings the present Psalter and listens to the present lectionary, and repeats the present creeds, is

going to have his faith complicated by some of these unnecessary and unedifying wrangles![1]

The recent report of the Archbishops' Committee attributes to the Church's theological teaching this failure to obtain a hearing for her message. "If the Church," says the report, "is to preach to this generation an evangel which will grip, it must come in some real sense as 'news'; news powerful enough to change the whole mental and spiritual outlook." Modernism, welcoming this confession of failure, replies that the "news" for which the Church is seeking is the Gospel of Jesus in the light of evolution. That Gospel, it claims, is still good news.

Light all the candles in all the churches, says Modernism, and set them round Kyrios Christos, and he will remain the same pagan power whose worship fell like a black night on Europe for a thousand years. But take the Gospel into the bright light of evolution, and Jesus at once comes into the vision of men as the Bread of Life, the Saviour of mankind, and the Light of the World.

"The Sonship of God, which Christ claimed for Himself before Caiaphas, and for which He was declared guilty of death, He claimed for all mankind; a relationship to God which implied continuity of nature. The Gospel that St. Paul preached . . . was that all men were the depositaries and inheritors

[1] *Faith or Fear?* (Macmillan.)

of God's Spirit, called to be saints and fellow-workers with God. That Gospel, and the hopes and courage and energy it supplied, was the message that 'gripped' the world." [1]

Modernism warns the orthodox of the peril run by a mind narrowed to the necessities of tradition. The Archbishop of York has said, "The ecclesiastical conscience, throughout history, has been a chosen home of subtlety and sophistry, where the name of God is continually taken in vain"; and Coleridge has told us that "he who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth will proceed by loving his own Sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all."

Consider, says the modernists, the Church of Rome. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is declared by the Roman Church to have been a supernatural person, not born in the way of nature, but immaculately conceived in the womb of her mother. Also she is described as "Ever Virgin," and believed by millions of people to be "Ever Virgin," though the very records of Christianity itself make it clear that she had other children, and justify the belief that James, the brother of Jesus, never ascribed to Christ the divine honours ascribed to him by St. Paul.

Is this not warning enough, they ask, of the danger of playing with truth? If the mind can find

[1] *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge.*

pleasure in deliberately rejecting incontrovertible evidence, and as deliberately protesting its faith in something demonstrably untrue, is it not an instrument which, unless reason be in firm command, can degrade the soul of man to savage level and finally put out the light of reason altogether?

Millions of Roman Catholics believe that a burning candle set before an image of Mary can obtain advantages of one kind or another, for themselves or for their friends. Protestants shudder at such superstition and denounce it as idolatrous blasphemy. But they themselves are as guilty of idolatrous superstition in persisting to believe that the blood of Christ is a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Roman Catholics call Mary "the Mother of God," and Protestants are filled with indignation at such paganism; but they themselves are as pagan in believing that Jesus was the Supreme Being, and that the Eternal Righteousness of God hung upon the cross of Calvary.

Science has made its conquests by the discovery that error of any kind is fatal to power. Theology has yet to discover that hypocrisy is even shameful.

If there should be anything clear to the eyes of theology in these days of transition, it is that all error is the enemy of man's progress, and that only by the most faithful loyalty to truth can he hope to discover Reality.

So long, then, as the Church persists in manifest errors, and so long as her leaders are satisfied by re-adjustments and restatements, she is to be regarded by those who attempt to love God and by their lives would be servants of humanity as an enemy of the human race.

Moreover, the whole record of history suggests that religious institutions are the worst enemies of religion. Christ spoke a word of eternal wisdom when he said that the wind bloweth where it listeth, and no man can tell whence it comes and whither it goes.

Grotesque and ridiculous was the action of the Church in burning Giordano Bruno and terrorising Galileo into taking a solemn oath that his truthful astronomy was a damnable error, contrary to the teaching of the holy, catholic, and apostolic Roman Church; but equally harmful to the advance of mankind, though less dramatic in its operations, is that spirit of institutional religion which imprisons the mind of man in a rigid system of thought, which crucifies his rational faculties on the cross of a false loyalty, and which destroys in his soul, as a sin against the Holy Ghost, that free and inquiring spirit of curiosity which has urged the true heroes of humanity to their beneficient victories over ignorance and fear.

If the history of religion has any clear lesson, says Kirsopp Lake, it is that a nearer approach to truth is always a departure from orthodoxy.

The conversation between the Father and His children, he tells us elsewhere, is not carried on without difficulty, or without effort on the part of the children. "It is their natural but mistaken instinct to try to find some way of escaping that difficulty and effort. For the striving of the Spirit in personal religion they have tried to substitute an infallible Church, an infallible Bible, an infallible historic Jesus. But all these have failed us, and we are driven back to a living religion of communion with God, without the intervention of any other guide claiming to be an infallible substitute for personal effort.

"It is not a tragedy; and those who fight against it as threatening to extinguish faith seem to me to be like men who have worked through the night, and at break of day wish to cover up their windows, lest the light of their candles be made dim by the rising run." [1]

[1] *The Stewardship of Faith.* (Christophers.)

CHAPTER VIII

PRACTICAL MYSTICISM

If, as the extreme modernists aver, the day of institutional religion is drawing to its close, there is a body of Christians already in existence which will preserve for mankind the spirit of the Christian Faith.

This body, known as the Society of Friends, or Quakers, expresses its theology with a reserve and a tolerance which is somewhat unusual in sectarian religion, and does not utter its evangelical enthusiasm, which is very real, in language of an emotional character. To a greater degree, perhaps, than all the other companies of Christians this little society of earnest and benevolent people seems to possess that particular quality of the faith which makes for unity and peace.

I think it is a recommendation of the Quaker spirit that it is born of a single conviction, which any man may put to the test in his own life. This conviction has been summarised in a simple sentence: "The light which reveals sin is the power which heals sin."

In other words, there is in man a light which can show him the defects of his character, and which, if it be turned upon those defects, will burn them away. This inner light is the witness of God, or even the companionship of God; and it is first by attention to this divine presence in his soul, and afterwards by a desire to live consciously in its companionship, that man comes to knowledge and love of God.

When questioned as to the reality and nature of the inner light, the early Friends were accustomed in return to ask the questioners whether they did not sometimes feel something within them that showed them their sins; and to assure them that this same power, which *made manifest*, and therefore was truly light, would also, if yielded to, lead them out of sin. This assurance, that the light which revealed was also the power which would heal sin, was George Fox's gospel.

The power itself was described by him in many ways. Christ within, the hope of glory; the light, life, spirit, and grace of Christ; the seed, the new birth, the power of God unto salvation, and many other expressions, flow forth in abundant streams of heartfelt eloquence. To "turn people to the light within," to direct them to Christ, their free Teacher," was his daily business.[1]

This confident belief that there is a divine presence in the life of all men, and that the presence

[1] *Quaker Strongholds.* By C. E. Stephen. (Kegan Paul.)

both reveals and heals the causes of disquiet and error, frees the Quaker from the difficulty of attempting to express his religion in a series of scientific formulas. "A Christianity of notions instead of a Christianity of experience" is an alternative with no attractions for the Quaker. Moreover, as he lays a strong emphasis on the need of silence in his public worship, there are not many opportunities for the orators of dogma to disturb the serenity of the meeting-house with controversial enthusiasm. Silence is reckoned a great strengthener of character, and the Quaker looks with a certain suspicion, as James Martineau did, on anyone who is too glib in his definitions of the incomprehensible God. Martineau is worth quoting in this place at some length:

> Trust is the belief of another's goodness on the inspiration of your own. The moment you ask for other grounds than this, and withhold your reliance till it can rest upon external proof, you cease to trust, and stipulate for knowledge. . . .
>
> It is just the deepest, the most solemn, and the holiest objects of thought that are apprehended by this path of trust; and when you perversely verge to either side, and will have either more or less than this, they swoon away from the dazed or darkened eye.
>
> Those who tell me too much about God, who speak as if they knew His motive and His plan in

everything; who are never at a loss to name the reason of every structure and show the tender mercy of every event; who praise the cleverness of the eternal economy and patronise it as a masterpiece of forensic ingenuity; who carry themselves through the solemn glades of Providence with the springy step and jaunty air of a familiar; do but drive me, by the very definiteness of their assurance, into an indefinite agony of doubt, and impel me to cry, "Ask of me less, and I shall give you all."

And, on the other hand, when I commune with those who have nothing to tell me about God; who treat the transient as the only real, and dismiss the Eternal as a negation and a dream; who pretend to lift the veil from nature and show us that there is No One there; who see on the brow of heaven no trace of thought, and in the beauty of a saint only the working of a vital chemistry, and in the historical development of humanity a mere frondescence from the circulating sap of civilisation; when, without once appealing to my faith, they account for everything *except this clinging faith itself*,—this little residual exception spoils all their work; and, in proportion to their success in bewildering my understanding, plunges me into the mood of enthusiasm as an escape from empty despair.[1]

Trust, he said, is *the natural attitude of the soul towards things diviner than herself;* and cannot be pushed aside by the rude pretensions, either of knowledge or of ignorance, *without the loss of her balance and the subversion of her peace.*

[1] ***Hours of Thought.*** James Martineau. (Longmans.)

The Quaker holds this same view of faith, and carries it to the point of denying the necessity of any one of those sacramental ceremonies which in some Christian Churches are the heart and centre of their religious life. The Quaker does not denounce ritual as a form of idolatry, nor does he deny that many may be helped by this means to escape from the illusions of the world; but in his quiet and conciliatory fashion, he does, nevertheless, maintain that none of those things is essential to communion with God.

This spirit is admirably expressed, I think, in a volume published by the Society, and entitled, *Christian Life, Faith, and Thought, in the Society of Friends:*

We conceive of Christianity, not as a collection of "notions" or doctrines, and a number of traditional observances; but as essentially an experience, and a way of life based on that experience. Christian unity for us consists, not in agreement in ideas and practices, but in a common *Christian experience*, apart from which neither doctrines nor practices appear to us to have meaning or value.

The main purpose of the writings of the early Friends, in so far as they were controversial, was to bring back the Church from a Christianity of ideas and practices to a Christianity of living experience and conformity to the mind and will of God, which they believed to have been its essential character in the first century. They also insisted that the possibility of this experience was open to

every human soul, and not only to a privileged few; that there was no exclusive priesthood, and not prescribed ceremony through which alone it could be received. . . . The experience in which these Quaker writers found the true basis of unity was something much more than a religion of feeling or passing emotion. It arose from a common love and loyalty to him whose love had won their hearts, and expressed itself in a definite type of Christian character and conduct, in a life of inward holiness and practical service to men. . . .

It is not in the life itself, but in the attempt to formulate its implications, and to fix it by uniform religious practices, that divisions arise. We do not in the least deprecate the attempt which must be made, since man is a rational being, to formulate intellectually the ideas which are implicit in religious experience. . . . But it should always be recognised that all such attempts are provisional, and can never be assumed to possess the finality of ultimate truth. There must always be room for development and progress, and Christian thought and inquiry should never be fettered by theory. . . .

Among the dangers of formulated statements of belief are these:

(1) They tend to crystallise thought on matters that will always be beyond any final embodiment in human language;

(2) They fetter the search for truth and for its more adequate expression; and

(3) They set up a fence which tends to keep out of the Christian fold many sincere and seeking souls who would gladly enter it.

We are in line with our fellow-Christians in the value which we, with them, attach to the historical facts on which our religion rests, and to the witness that has been borne to them through creeds, however far from final, and even through liturgy and symbol, though these to us are non-essential. But to us creeds have no value, save as they testify to the eternal realities which men must apprehend by spiritual experience, and express by life and conduct. A vital creed is not static, but dynamic; it can never be finally expressed in any form of words; it depends upon, and is held in the most intimate connection with the developing life of the Spirit in the souls of men. Thus, while truth is eternal, our apprehension of it enlarges, and our expression of it changes, and Friends do not feel prepared to pin their adhesion to a form of words which at best embody a sincere attempt to define that measure of truth which has so far been apprehended in words appropriate to the age in which they are spoken.

As for their worship, they tell us:

Friends do not use the altar and the symbols of sacrifice in order to reach God, because it is an outstanding fact of our knowledge of Him that He is at hand, waiting to enter the heart that is opened to Him. . . .

In holding that outward rites are unnecessary, and contrary to their understanding of the nature of God, Friends only insist the more strongly that the whole of life is sacramental.

The last sentence is important. The Quakers belong to the company of mystics, but their occu-

pation is by no means narrowed to deepening the sense of God in their lives by meditation and silent prayer. Their religion is essentially an outdoor religion. The whole of life to them is sacramental; and every act of a man, they tell us, must tend either to the glory of God or to His dishonour. Therefore, they are extremely careful and conscientious in all their relations with other people, most careful to exercise the great Christian virtues, not for the purpose of "saving" those others, but lest they themselves should bring God into the sphere of distrust or contempt.

It is evident, I think, that these earnest people have mistaken the censure of Jesus on the physical force party of Jewish politics for an injunction against all soldierly patriotism; and also have taken a far too narrow view of the æsthetic values. But it would seem from their later deliberations that they recognise revelation as a continuous process, and are now much more ready than in former times to give art and literature their just place in the development of the religious principle.

The greatest service, however, which they have rendered to humanity lies in their central insistence, that the inner light, which Dr. Otto now calls the numinous element, is the witness of God in the individual soul, and that in revealing to man his unrest and his shortcomings, this same light also

invigorates his spiritual nature, and strengthens it for further ascension from animal levels to the greater consciousness of God, which is the Kingdom of Heaven.

If it be true, as these people say with quiet conviction, and as the Salvationists say with confident assurance, that men can be healed in a moment of the blackest of sins, and ever afterward find supreme health and satisfaction in self-abnegation without employing any of the rites of traditional Christianity, it would seem almost incumbent on the Churches, however strongly they still maintain the beauty and sanctity of their sacramental systems, to acknowledge that even the Eucharist is not *essential* to the forgiveness of sins and a new birth in Christ Jesus.

One does not easily see how these Quakers and Salvationists can be charged with presumption so long as the parable of the Prodigal Son keeps its place in the Gospel of Christianity, and certainly one can say that the universal history of the human race is a witness to the truth of the Quaker's main contention, that in every man there is a power which sorrows when he falls and lends him its aid when he earnestly seeks to ascend.

By courageously acknowledging these things, and honourably acting upon them, something might be

done at least to minimise the dogmatic differences which separate one body of Christians from another, and which alienate the sympathies of the average man from the whole subject of religion.

CHAPTER IX

MODERN AGNOSTICISM

Not so very long ago the average agnosticism of Europe was mainly based on the hearsay of a too confident materialism.

I remember even so industrious a student as John Morley telling me, with a wave of the cigarette between his fingers, that the whole mystery of creation would be explained when physical science had examined the interior of the atom; I remember, too, the amazed expression on his face when I announced to him that the atom had been explored, and that its interior was found to contain nothing more visible and tangible than the mystery which we call electricity.

In those days religion was largely ridiculed because it dealt, or professed to deal, with invisible forces. The good common sense of the period preferred to stand on the solid ground of material fact. From that vantage ground it was almost inevitable that practical men should regard religious people with something of the indulgence which dull uncles and tired aunts display towards the radiant happiness of children. The difference in their eyes

between the Gospel and Hans Andersen was not a matter of serious importance.

Common sense at the present time is obliged to adopt a more respectful attitude towards the general theory of religion. The solid ground on which it stood twenty years ago has become a rushing mass of electrical charges, travelling at twelve hundred miles a minute round the sun; to walk on any part of it, even on a plank, as Professor Eddington says, is "like stepping on a swarm of flies." The real world, in fact, has been transformed by physical science itself into the illusory creation of our poor human senses. The materialist now sits, ironically enough, in ghostly emptiness, with headphones over his ears, listening to the actual voice, and even the occasional cough, of Professor Bragg two hundred miles away. Reality, he discovers, is of the very stuff with which religion has been dealing for several thousands of years.

But although the attitude is changed, agnosticism still maintains its opinion that the ultimate mysteries of man's mind are insoluble. It may have ceased to patronise religion, but it is still far from believing the confident affirmations of theologians. Question the average man of to-day, and one finds that he is either angry with the Church or indifferent to its existence. Far must a man travel, I believe, before he will encounter any educated per-

son who is seriously inquiring into the doctrines of the Christian Faith.

It will be useful, I think, to enumerate the beliefs and disbeliefs of the average person, if only that we may understand the mental attitude of the age towards the chief doctrines of orthodox religion. And certainly until the Church takes more trouble to understand this attitude she cannot hope to discharge her duty to the present generation with any measure of success.

So far as my experience goes, it is true to affirm of the average man that he does not believe in the story of Adam and Eve, and will not accept it as an allegory. For him it is a pure invention, and its place the lumber-room of mythology. It represents no truth in human experience, and misrepresents any idea of the Creator which can be of value to mankind.[1]

He does not believe that because of blood splashed on doorposts, without which a mistake might have been made, an angel of God left the babies of Israelites sleeping peacefully in their cots, while he industriously slaughtered the innocent children of Egyptians. This Jewish story, which tradition has

[1] He knows nothing of the interesting theory propounded by Dr. Formby in *The Unveiling of the Fall,* nor is he moved by the knowledge that a similar doctrine is to be found in almost all ancient religions.

made an essential part of the Christian Religion, as if the Egyptian children were sacrified to afford an opportunity for instituting the Eucharist, is denounced by the average man as disgusting, unthinkable, and even blasphemous.

He does not believe that an archangel appeared to the mother of Jesus, or that Jesus was born out of the order of nature. He does not believe that Jesus raised people from the dead, or that at the crucifixion graves opened, and men and women who had been buried there broke free, and walked about the streets. He does not believe that Jesus rose from the dead and in his physical body ascended above the atmosphere of the earth. He does not believe that there was any "transaction" between God and Jesus, before Jesus appeared on the earth, or that the crucifixion was a predestined event of central importance to the Revelation of God.

He does not believe that the Bible is verbally inspired, or that the history of the Church bears any convincing witness to the guidance of a Holy Spirit.

On these heads I find that he is not merely sceptical, but a positive unbeliever. He holds that to believe in any of these things is to violate reason, and to confess oneself as blind, as superstitious,

and as stupid as the Inquisition which terrorised Galileo into swearing that the earth did not move, that the sun did rise and set, and ordered the poor old man to "abjure, curse, and detest the said errors and heresies, and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome."

But he does not disbelieve in the existence of God; while in the Character of Jesus he finds his highest ideal of manhood. As for the teachings of Jesus, he appears to regard them, like so many orthodox believers, as counsels of perfection, and confesses that he does not see how they could be applied to a complex civilisation. At the same time he admits that if the spirit of that teaching animated the industrial and political life of England we should be in a far safer condition than we are at the present time.

On the subject of prayer, which is perhaps central to the whole problem, he seems to think that the best prayer is honest work, and does not feel as if he could kneel down at his bedside and ask for blessings or mercies from a God Who never interferes with the reign of law. He is entirely ignorant of the modern view of prayer, thinks of this instinct of the dependent soul of man only as a superstition which is limited for expression to formal peti-

tions for blessings or miracles, and cannot understand how men and women who have worked hard in shops and offices through the week can go to a church on Sunday. He is very emphatic in declaring that he gets far more good out of a country walk, a bicycle ride, or a game of golf on Sunday than the other man gets out of going to a church. Nevertheless, he admits that he does occasionally pray, and says that if the Service of the Church was more cheering and less irritating he would certainly attend "public worship" on rainy days.

Concerning his personal responsibility to God, he doubts whether this is very great, and repudiates the idea that it can include theological opinions. He says that if he does an honest day's work, keeps faith with his neighbours, looks after his family, and practises what charity he can afford, he is not likely to get into more serious trouble with the heavenly authorities, if immortality is indeed a fact, than with the police authorities on earth.

This attitude of mind, which I believe to be as common as it is dangerous, is almost entirely due to the uncompromising traditionalism of the Church. The average man, trusting and respecting dynamic science, distrusting and despising static clericalism, has fallen into the grievous error of supposing that Christian theology is religion. He has lost interest in spiritual things and seems incapable of realis-

ing that Christianity came late into the great stream of religion which has borne man forward from the day of his birth. He has no conception of what we mean when we speak of the Humanity of God and the Divinity of man. For him, God is a remote potentate or a just conceivable hypothesis; and man at his best one of the higher animals.

In this way he does not perceive that religion is essential to the development of the human spirit, and that the very heart and centre of religion is aspiration. He labours under the fallacy that evolution is a mechanical process, and has not yet seen that without the driving power of aspiration there could have been no movement from savagery and superstition. Thus it comes about that he is unconscious in himself, so completely has the dogmatic traditionalism of the Church denaturalised him, of any longing for spiritual reality. He does not know that the unrest which occasionally overtakes him, and the disquiet which visits him in times of bereavement, are due entirely to the starvation of his spiritual nature.

But there is another school of thought in contemporary agnosticism, which is worthy of attention. This is a school which does not so much disbelieve the dogmas of religion as disbelieve the sincerity of those who protest that they do believe them. A letter from one of my correspondents

shows the nature of this agnosticism in a forcible but perfectly well-mannered way, and I will quote the greater part of it, not only as a valuable example of agnosticism, but as a lesson to certain religious journalists in controversial good-manners:

DEAR SIR,—Like many thousands of others, I have read with much interest your series of articles in the *Daily Mail;* and I have also read, without surprise, that you have been inundated by letters from readers, which you very properly do not propose to answer. It is in no sense because I wish to add to your over-burdened post, nor from any expectation or desire that you should reply, that I venture to send you these lines; but I do so from a feeling that you have somewhat failed to appreciate the position of those who look askance upon religion, and with a hope that you may reconsider the matter, if possible, from their point of view.

The description of the attitude of the average man in your final article I find precisely applicable to myself; with the proviso that I decline to subscribe to a belief that an all-powerful Creator has endued the countless millions of the animal kingdom, for His own pleasure, with entire predatory and cruel instincts. . . . As regards Christianity and the Christian Church, however, your average man and I are practically in the same boat. But I do not think you quite understand our reasons for our attitude to Christianity, and that is why I am bold enough, though a total stranger, to address you.

We have all read, and most of us have been brought up on, the New Testament—that collection of writings, or at least the first four books, containing the teaching and philosophy of Jesus. That teaching, whatever else may be said about it, has the merit of extreme simplicity; the wayfaring men, though fools, cannot fail to understand it. It is simply the complete subordination of self, and the preference of every other interest to our own. The Christian must never in any circumstances seek his own good, even when he has right and justice on his side. The most abject humility is enjoined (Matt. v. 3, 5; xviii. 4; xx. 27; xxiii. 8, 9; Mark ix. 35; x. 44; Luke vi. 20; xiv. 8, 12). Poverty is essential to righteousness; if anyone has means he must divest himself of them (Matt. v. 42; xix. 21; Mark vi. 8, 9; x. 21; Luke vi. 24; xii. 33). Everyone must love his neighbour (Matt. vii. 12; xxii. 39; John xv. 12, 17). Improvidence is obligatory, because care for the future implies some selfish consideration (Matt. vi. 25, 26, 31, 34; x. 9, 10; Luke vi. 38; x. 41, 42; vii. 6, 7, 22). Quarrels must be invariably shunned (Matt. v. 25). All injury and wrong, far from being resented or rebelled against, are to be accepted without protest even with pleasure. The Christians must endure persecution and ill-treatment gladly; far from resisting invasion of his rights, he must seek to reward his oppressor by offering him more than he has taken (Matt. v. 10-12; 39-41, 44; Luke vi. 22, 29, 30). All wrongs done or insults offered to the Christian must be immediately forgiven; love of his enemies and oppressors is inculcated as essential to his

Christianity (Matt. vi. 15; xviii. 21, 35; Mark ix. 26; Luke vi. 26, 27, 35). Natural affections are to be suppressed (Matt. viii. 22; Luke ix. 60). No Christian is to judge others; the fact that he is a sinner himself precludes him from condemning sin in everyone else (Matt. vii. 1; Luke vi. 37, 41; xii. 14, 15; John viii. 11).

Let us see how these precepts affect the actions of ordinary life, and to what extent they govern the conduct of those who earnestly profess to be guided by them. It is the duty of a Christian to give all that he has to anyone who asks of him; he has no right to pry into the probable use to which his substance is to be put; it is enough that someone else wants it. To go to law is always and necessarily sinful; if anything is due to you, you should not try to enforce payment of it; should anyone seek to obtain that from you which you do not owe, you ought to let him have it without protest. It is wrong for a landlord to press for his rent, for a merchant to press for payment of his account. The employer is wrong who refuses to give any wage his workmen ask for; while the workman is equally wrong to seek for more than his employer chooses to give. Justice and equity have nothing to do with the matter; indeed it is only by accepting, without protest, injustice or oppression that you really show yourself a Christian. Any form of scheming or combination for the advancement of your own interest is strictly forbidden. Resistance to oppression is sinful. Forgiveness of injuries is imperative and must be unqualified. To judge and condemn another is always wrong; as

you are aware of your own imperfections you cannot without hypocrisy hold up the sins of your neighbours to reprobation. The mote in your brother's eye should have no attraction for you; the beam in your own is your proper consideration. Competition of any kind is evil, unless it be to give the prior place to someone else. Improvidence is imperative; no Christian is to take thought for the morrow, or provide for the future in any manner.

It is only necessary to enunciate a bald statement of the Christian doctrine such as the above to show that Christian practice falls far short of it; not only that, but that no attempt whatever is made by Christians to attain to the Christian rule of conduct. It is not the case that Christians try to act up to an ideal, and fail merely because of the frailty of human nature; they do not try to act up to the ideal at all, but openly and deliberately flout it at every point of their lives. Now it is the bare truth that nobody ever met or heard of a man who ordered his life according to the precepts imperatively laid down by Jesus. The Christian defends his rights with the same tenacity as any heathen, pagan, or infidel, and makes no effort to do otherwise. He does not throw away his goods to anybody who asks for them. He resists oppression and injustice with all his might, and he has no hesitation in advising resistance in others. He does not relish persecution at all, except in the not unfamiliar case in which he is the persecutor. If an unauthorised person orders him to go a mile, he will probably decline to proceed a yard. If someone steals his cloak, he will only divest him-

self of his coat the better to catch or chastise the malefactor.

I have given chapter and verse for my analysis of the Christian morality, and I do not think that anyone who takes the trouble to verify my references will say that I have overstated the case. If there is anyone (yourself or any other professed Christian) who can honestly declare that he lives or seriously tries to live in accordance with the unequivocal commands of Christ as I have extracted them from his own words, then I will take off my hat to him, and acknowledge that, after sixty-six years of life, I have at last met a Christian. So far as my experience and reading of history go, I do not believe there have ever been any Christians at all. And it is this which causes the coldness—to go no further—of us, the average men, towards Christianity and the Church. We see a body of men professing to live according to a plain, unambiguous rule of conduct, and applying it without scruple to the actions of others whom they wish to attack or deride, yet daily and hourly violating the precepts which they say are obligatory. From this we can scarcely be blamed if we draw the conclusion that there must be some flaw in the Christian system of ethics, in spite of its glamour, and suspect that after all there is some better and even higher rule of life. Nor can we be seriously blamed for our attitude towards religion in general. To us, Christianity, as practised by Christians, is an obvious fraud; and the Church, in the worst sense of the words, an organised hypocrisy. We do not despise the priest because we think he is better than

we are, as many people seem to think; it is because we are quite certain that he is worse. He is a professional hypocrite; and hypocrisy is as bad a vice as can be found.[1] In truth, we do not see how an organisation such as the Church, which exists primarily for mutual protection and advancement, can be Christian at all.

I am of course conversant with the arguments put forward—generally by priests—to excuse the notorious divergence between Christian precept and practice; but I do not advert to them, because your sincerity is so obvious that I am quite satisfied they would receive no support from you. I have not alluded to the dogmatic side of Christianity, because it is not that which keeps the average man aloof from the Church; from your own words I infer that you are not what is called an orthodox Christian yourself. As an average man, I know that the Immaculate Conception [2] is a rather coarse version of the earlier Buddhist legend; I know that the cross is an old pagan . . . symbol; I know that the author of the Fourth Gospel put his own words and doctrines into the mouth of Christ, just as probably Plato (not Xenophon) did with Socrates. It is not because the Church believes a quantity of things which I know to be fabulous

[1] This sentence suggests temper and may be considered harsh and bad-mannered; but we must remember that in the eyes of my correspondent the priests of the Christian Religion occupy much the same moral position as the Scribes and Pharisees occupied in the eyes of Jesus. It is not to make them angry, I imagine, but to make them truer men, as he understands truth, that he upbraids them.—H. B.

[2] He falls into the common error of supposing the recent doctrine of the Immaculate Conception to be one and the same thing as the doctrine of the Virgin Birth.—H. B.

that I and other average men have any quarrel with it; I might think it stupid or easily gullible, but I should respect it none the less, if that were all. The dogmatic part of religion is not a stumbling-block to anyone who realises that it is not of the *essence* of religion at all; and I think this truth is more generally realised than is commonly supposed.

If you have had the patience to wade through my lucubrations so far, will you permit me to thank you for your courtesy, and to apologise for taking up your time, which I know to one of your many activities is too valuable to be wasted on the ramblings of strangers of no importance?

Believe me, etc., etc.

This letter seems to me valuable for two reasons. First, it expresses with clearness and directness an opinion which I believe to be fairly general among an older generation of agnostics; and, second, it brings home to those who have striven to make the findings of Modernism known among men how little they have succeeded.

Here is a man of evident intelligence and entire sincerity, who does not know, apparently, that modern thinkers carefully distinguish between those utterances of Jesus which were palpably addressed to the religious and political parties of his day and those which clearly have a universal and eternal significance for the soul of man. With all his knowledge and insight, my correspondent places

himself on the level of the literalists, and inveighs against the Church for not accepting the language of poetry as the language of geometry. It is as if scholarship had not laboured to make Jesus real to us, and as if educated men who still presume, but always with humility, to call themselves Christians, are blameable for not behaving as if they were as ignorant as Fundamentalists. My correspondent's unacquaintance with modernism does not, however, invalidate his argument in case of those Christians who denounce Modernism. He has taken his notion of Christianity from the orthodox Church, and on that ground who will have the courage to say that he errs in charging the ministers of institutional religion with preaching one Gospel and practising another?

It has often seemed to me that the simplest and completest answer one can make to the more pugnacious champions of orthodoxy is a challenge to give us those tests which Christ himself said, *according to their documents*, should be given by those who believe, namely, to cast out devils, to speak with new tongues, to take up serpents, and to drink any deadly thing.

But it is wiser for all of us, in the present condition of the world, to draw closer together, and to see what can be done to minimise the distractions of the Church, and to commend the true Gospel of the Living Christ to the hearts and minds of those

who are attempting to live without his companionship.

If the Church could serve the average man at this moment in history, she must, I think, first of all accustom herself to believe that religion was made for man, and not man for religion. She must put aside the dead hand of tradition which is pressed over her eyes, and see clearly that the religion of Jesus is not an evolution of Magic, nor a culmination of Asiatic Mysteries, but a system of ethics. Lord Acton, I may remind theologians, who was not only a great scholar, but a Roman Catholic, protested with all his force against those who regard Christianity as *a mere system of metaphysics which borrowed its ethics from elsewhere.* "It is rather," he said, "a system of ethics which borrowed its metaphysics from elsewhere." These ethics, let us remind ourselves, inspired by the central and creative emotion of love, have done more than any other force in history to purify human nature and dignify human character.

Not one of the difficult dogmas which divide the Church and keep the average man outside religion was ever mentioned or suggested by the historical Jesus. History reveals that divine being to modern eyes as one who sought to help humanity by teaching it a way of life which, experience has proved, brings the individual soul of man into sensible re-

lation with the universe and intimate communion with God.

To believe in Jesus, as he himself used the phrase, meant to believe that he spoke truth. To follow him, as he understood the command, meant to lead a life of unselfish love. Never once did he demand of men that they should profess faith in any of those abstruse doctrines whose history, from the first moment of their promulgation to the present time, has been a history of conflict, intolerance, disruption, and wasteful controversy. He did not want to perplex human nature, but to help it.

Those doctrines, it is clear from our history, have never counted greatly with the English people. English character has been moulded in the individualism of Jesus. As soon as the English Bible came into English hands, it was the beauty of Jesus which tempered English hearts and kindled the flame of moral realism in English character. The whole movement of spiritual life in England has been a struggle to get behind so late and erring a thing as institutional religion to the Character of Jesus.

Centuries ago his Personality became a national possession. His words are the music of our noblest literature, his Character its radiance. If we have been more successful than other nations, and if our record as an imperial race is chiefly the record of unselfish service, it is because the teaching of Jesus has shaped our characters to acknowledge the duty

of right-doing, to see the shame and cowardice of wrong-doing, and to feel that personal responsibility is not a burden, but rather a proud commission. The note of English character is *conscientiousness*, a personal quality of infinite fruitfulness.

The herd instinct, which is a thing of fear and not a thing of courage, has had less power in these islands, up to the present day, than in any other quarter of the world. We have believed, and acted on the belief, that each man is personally responsible for his thoughts, words, and deeds, and that what a man sows that he shall reap.

But now, with the failure of the Church to convince the English people of straightforwardness, a new and significant spirit is everywhere manifesting itself in the nation. Communism and Catholicism are becoming popular, and individualism is weakening. Our educational system is mechanical, and aims at mental mass production, to the great injury of self-reliance and originality. Fashion and convention have a similar tendency, blurring character and discouraging initiative. The tameness of our submission to bureaucratic encroachments is a symptom of feebleness in personality. Economically we would save ourselves in vast communised groups of workers moved as one dense impersonal mass by a few politicians. Imperially we would escape our responsibilities by handing over millions of people

to the petty tyrants from whose parasitical dishonesties our fathers delivered them.

Everywhere in the nation there is a tendency to drift, an unwillingness to act vigorously, a manifestation of moral and intellectual weariness, a feeling that self-reliance and conscientiousness are burdens too heavy to be borne. We are becoming, not a vigorous nation of united, self-dependent individuals, but a stampeded herd, a collection of bewildered "groups."

Against this spirit, fatal to our national greatness as well as to our national character, it is the duty of the Church to oppose the ethic of Jesus—that great ethic of individualism, with its central insistence on personal responsibility and direct relationship with God. Let her truly and earnestly realise that this duty presses to be discharged, and she will find strength to address herself, honestly, and energetically, to the task, her rightful task, of presenting the Christian Religion to the English nation with the simplicity and sincerity of its Founder.

Human experience bears record that whereas Greatness, like Freedom, is a power to be vigilantly maintained and steadily extended, a power which is soon lost when it is merely inherited, Goodness,

the foundation of Greatness, cannot be inherited. It is a personal possession, only to be won by the individual soul in conscious and desirous communion with the Eternal Righteousness.

CHAPTER X

LUX MUNDI

By the title of this book I have suggested that every school of religious opinion is a beam of light broken from the white radiance of Eternity.

Now, let any man consider in his imagination, for so long a time as he can bear it, the thought of the transplendency of the Eternal, and he will find, however great the surety of his confidence in the sacred usefulness of the church to which he belongs, that it is difficult, very difficult, to believe that any one school or congregation of men on this planet adequately reflects the glory of God.

If every man in a city so numerous as London brought in his two hands a candle or a lamp to some single place of meeting the glow of that concentrated illumination, great as it might be, would seem as the darkness of night in comparison with the luminosity of the sun. And yet there are stars in the sky so immeasurably vaster than the great centre of our solar system, which is one of the dwarf stars, that it might sink into their midst and be

swallowed clean out of sight, like a pebble thrown into the sea.[1]

I venture to suggest to the various schools of religious opinion which are working in separation that each one of them should first think of its Light as a single candle by which it is struggling to decipher something of the text of God in human history, and then consider whether, by bringing their various candles together, they might not read that text with less fear of overlooking an essential word, and also, with more hope of persuading those who sit in darkness that they do indeed reflect something of the Light of Christ.

Men speak bitterly of "a dim religious light," and quote with irony Gray's famous line—

> Rich windows that exclude the light,

meaning thereby that the Church lamentably fails to obey the command, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

It is surely one of the saddest consequences of religious division that it should tend by this dispersion of the Gospel light to obscure the good works of those who, in this generation, are serving

[1] "Now the star V Puppis, with 10,000 times the luminosity of the sun, is radiating energy which, if the energy were brought in from a power-station, would require the consumption of 500 million million million tons of coal a second" (Dr. J. H. Jeans, *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge*).

Christ with a heart-broken devotion, and a suffering poverty, which I do not think have been excelled in the history of the Christian Church. So thoroughly is this heroic service obscured, that the agnostic world has lost, or is fast losing, a living sense of Christianity's extreme importance, and seems unable even to realise that all the "values" of civilisation which are essential to its safety came from and repose in this ignored religion—this religion which created not only the culture of Christendom, but the character of the highest type of human being.

I believe this general ignorance of the Church's activity to be a considerable hindrance to the progress of mankind. Christian character is not telling at this juncture as it ought to tell. Everywhere one goes the minister of Christ is to be found patiently doing the dull spade-work of humanity, and yet the total effect of this multitudinous labour seems to count for nothing in the estimation of the world, and to produce no vigorous consequence in the force which we call public opinion. I think it would be different if the Church addressed humanity with one voice, and, with the confidence only to be given by a rational faith, challenged the world to say how civilisation is to continue without the standards of Christianity.

The time in which we live is not unlike the time when Jesus was born into the world between two ages. Just as it seemed to many Greeks and Romans in those days that humanity had arrived at political stability, and that the peace of the world and the progress of mankind were now for ever assured by the good sense of the imperial authority, so we are disposed to think that under the ægis of the League of Nations, and with international commerce close linked by means of many wonderful inventions, we are finding our way to economic equilibrium, and soon shall be delivered from all fears of war, pestilence, and famine.

Never perhaps are the fortunes of humanity more likely to plunge into sudden darkness and lose the thread of their moral continuity in the disruptive anarchy of political terror than when the economic situation of the world either absorbs all the anxieties of mankind or gratifies their confidence in the philosophy of materialism.

Certainly, in a time like this, those who guide their lives by the wisdom of Christ are not sufficiently numerous to work in separation from each other, much less in opposition to each other. If their desire is for the victory of their Master, and not for their Church, and if they truly have at heart the highest interests of civilisation, not the propagation of certain theological notions, they will make

a genuine and persistent effort to congregate their lights at the one centre of their illumination, and from that centre, united in all those things which are essential to the salvation of the world, set out to glorify God among men.

The difficulties are great, but so is the world's need; nor do I think these difficulties would seem so insuperably great if the disputants could make up their minds to accept one reasonable proposition concerning the revelation which inspires their devotion. Most of them believe in the Church as a living institution, inspired by the Holy Spirit active in the world. Why cannot they, then, go but a step further and believe it still more—believe, that is to say, that the Holy Spirit is for ever revealing God's Will, and that revelation, though institutions and rites may serve it, is essentially "not the communication of truths about God, but the self-disclosure of God in personal life, and that its purpose is not primarily to teach correct theology, but to propagate an experience?" [1]

The other view, as it was expressed by Hugh James Rose, is surely no longer tenable, or, at any rate, is not really acted upon by any intelligent man at the present time: ". . . Truth was so clearly revealed at the outset of Christianity as it was ever

[1] *The Idea of Revelation.* By W. R. Matthews. (Longmans.)

intended to be known. Its record is in Scripture, and if doubt as to the meaning of Scripture with respect to doctrines occurs, we can appeal to witnesses competent from the time when they lived and the knowledge they enjoyed to remove these doubts entirely. Where, then, is earthly philosophy? It is excluded. There is no scope under such a system for its discoveries or monitions, no room for its theories, no arena for its genius. There is nothing to discuss in revelation. The province of the human understanding with respect to Scripture is to believe and obey it."

One may see where such a spirit leads in the following notice recently published by the leader of the Texas Fundamentalists in an American newspaper:

Notice is hereby served that any man who occupies any pulpit in this city of any denomination, and any teacher or professor who holds a position of trust in any school—if said teacher or minister openly advocates the evolution theory or any phase of modern infidelity, he might just as well prepare to go to the tannery that operates 365 days in the year as the First Baptist Church. We have no apology in the world to offer for the defence of the Gospel and for hanging the hides of the first cousins and defenders of the orang-outang on the topmost telephone poles in the city.

It is a spirit which leads inevitably to a condition of ignorance beneath the contempt of a schoolboy, and to a vulgarity of mind not really less far from the Spirit of Christ than the worst obscenities of a blasphemous atheism.

I feel convinced that if all the Christians in the world would agree to acknowledge that God is continually disclosing Himself to mankind, and that the life of Christ, though it stand for ever as the supreme revelation, did not end this merciful process, but rather gave it a new direction, there would be firm ground under the feet of theologians for building up the structure of religious unity. But until this acknowledgment is frankly and plainly made by all the divided disciples of Christ there can be no hope that conferences and conversations, however polite and even amicable, can end in anything that will convince mankind either of Christian charity or Christian lucidity.

Let me conclude by venturing to utter two words of warning. The present position in the Church of England graphically illustrates the monition of Christ concerning a house divided against itself. Indeed it is difficult to see how the present conflict can end, so bitter and uncompromising is the temper in each camp, without bringing destruction on both parties. Not long ago there was a signal

hoisted to the Church from an unexpected quarter, which she would do well to pay heed to before she goes further on this road of destruction.

It is no good building churches if there is no one to minister in them; nor, indeed, is there any gain if those who are sent to minister are unequal to the task. Confident statements were made at the Oxford Diocesan Conference that there are plenty of candidates for the ministry, if only the money can be found for their training. It is possible to be somewhat dubious about the quality of many of the aspirants, and legitimate fears are felt in some quarters that the kind of training they receive in partisan institutions is hardly likely to compensate for natural deficiencies. It is unfortunate that too many of the funds that are being raised are in the hands of those whose judgment and breadth of outlook are open to question.[1]

There is danger in blinking this disastrous fact. Evangelicals of the extremest kind are guarding one door of entrance into the Church, and Anglo-Catholics equally extreme the other. It is monstrous, it is intolerable; but it remains; and the reasonable men in the Church seem powerless to alter it. Soon there will be few ministers in the Church of England sufficiently educated to preach an intelligent sermon, or to hold their own in a theological argument with an agnostic from a sec-

[1] *The Times*, November 9, 1925.

ondary school. What can be the end of such a Church in a world which has definitely decided "to make a bonfire of all speculations unsupported either by comparison with observation, or by reasoning based on natural knowledge?"

And while the Church is thus threatened by the worst evils of partisanship, science, which she once treated as an enemy, is more and more invading her own sacred territory of the invisible, and there confidently exploring some of the closest secrets of the soul. Let any man read such a book as *Thought-transference*, by Dr. Stacey Wilson, a devout Christian as well as a brilliant physician, or the remarkable chapter on "Religion and Psychology" contributed by Dr. William Brown to the book called *Science, Religion, and Reality*, and say whether he can doubt that science in fifty years' time will be giving men more valuable information about their relationship with the spiritual universe than is now available in the Churches of Christendom. This is a word of warning that a sincere lover of his Church will take seriously to his heart. The truth is that at a time when the Church can only stand if her ministers are of the highest intellectual order, she is not merely lowering her standards of intelligence, but actually encouraging the trivial and hypnotised cadets of ignorant faction to take command of her destinies, and to continue in the future that contemptible squabble at the foot of

the Cross which has already brought her to a condition of such pitiable weakness.

The times are perilous, far more perilous, I think, than the religious partisans realise. Politically we are living from bribe to expedient, economically from strike to lock-out and from dole to subsidy, morally from fashion to fad. There is a grave absence in the life of the nation of three essential things: fixed principles, comradeship, and vigorous aspiration. Our need, then, for religion, is great—the religion which unifies a nation, steadies it, moralises its leisure, consecrates its labour, and illuminates its striving soul. Such a religion saved us in the days of Wyclif, in the days of Erasmus and Colet, in the days of John Bunyan and George Fox, and in the days of Wesley. It is the religion which does not pay laborious attention to tradition, but which searches for truth in the inward parts and by the force of its tremendous conviction sets every man mending his life. For lack of that burning religious light it seems to me that we are walking in darkness and stumbling towards chaos.

If the extremists who are now tearing the Church asunder for what they believe to be the glory of God could go away from their controversies and altars for only a few days, and in the unbroken silence of retreat think steadily and solely of their tremendous responsibility both to God and this

country, I am sure that all of them in whom the bigot is not absolute master would return to their posts of duty with a desire for peace uppermost in their hearts, and in their minds an eager desire to recognise as co-workers with God all those who sincerely love and unselfishly serve Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

13281
The Evangelical
School of Theology
45.106

DATE DUE

BT 28 .B44 1926

230
B 4

Begbie, Harold, 1871-1929.

Broken lights

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

United Theological Seminary Library
MAIN BT28.B44 1926
Begbie, Harol Broken lights :
3 0645 0002 5311 8